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# BELZEC

IN PROPAGANDA, TESTIMONIES,  
ARCHEOLOGICAL RESEARCH & HISTORY



BY CARLO MATTOGNO

PUBLISHED BY THE BARNES REVIEW

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*Belzec in Propaganda, Testimonies,  
Archeological Research & History*

By CARLO MATTOGNO

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# Introduction

For official historiography it is now indisputable dogma that, from March 1942 onwards, three extermination camps were set up on Polish soil – at Bełżec, at Treblinka, and at Sobibór – where mass murder of Jews deported there took place in homicidal gas chambers using the exhaust gases from diesel engines. However, this is neither the first nor the only version that circulated during the Second World War; it was the eventual result of a slow narrative evolution, the main phases of which can be followed in the propaganda, in the original historical version, and in the judicial proceedings of that time. Until 1946, there circulated several totally different versions of the extermination methods allegedly used in those camps, which nonetheless received the blessings of the Polish authorities. With respect to the number of victims in these camps, various absolutely ludicrous figures were reported: 3 million for Treblinka,[\[1\]](#) now reduced to 870,000; some 2 million for Sobibór,[\[2\]](#) now standing at 250,000; and 3 million for Bełżec,[\[3\]](#) against 600,000 at present.

How and why did the present ‘authorized’ version of official historiography come about? And what is its historical value? In the book *Treblinka: Extermination Camp or Transit Camp?*[\[4\]](#) Jürgen Graf and I have exhaustively answered those questions for the alleged extermination camp at Treblinka. The present study undertakes the same task with respect to the alleged extermination camp at Bełżec. In the discussion which follows, I shall obviously make use of the results arrived at in my Treblinka book, without repeating the corresponding evidence each time, although some quotations become necessary.

I did not, on the other hand, think it necessary to reiterate the technical objections valid with respect to the use of diesel exhaust gases for homicidal gassings; they apply for the Treblinka camp just as much as for Bełżec.[\[5\]](#) Aside from this, I have been able to make use of a precious tool – archeological research at the ‘scene of the crime’ – which unfortunately was not available at Treblinka and which, as we shall see, will furnish us with conclusive criteria for testing the official theses.

Carlo Mattogno



# Chapter I:

## Literary Origins and Development of the Alleged Methods of Murder

### 1. Birth of an ‘Extermination Camp’

Bełżec originated in the summer of 1940 as a work camp,<sup>[6]</sup> but from November 1941 on – according to the official historiography – it took on a new function as a camp for total extermination, in line with the camps at Sobibór and Treblinka created later. This means that the Jews deported there were totally exterminated on arrival, except for an insignificant handful of people who were allowed to live a little while longer in order to carry out labor tasks. The alleged extermination activity at Bełżec began on March 17, 1942, and ended in November or December of that year. The camp was allegedly equipped, successively, with two extermination installations. The first, made of wood, was allegedly built some time in November and December 1941; it measured 12 by 8 meters and housed three gas chambers 4 by 8 meters each. The second structure was claimed to have been set up in June of 1942 after the first had been torn down. It was a brick structure that contained six gas chambers arranged on either side of a central corridor, each measuring 4 by 5 meters.<sup>[7]</sup>

For Bełżec, and the other two camps as well, the study of the origins and development of the sources of information during the war and in the postwar period is of vital importance for an understanding of how the currently dominant historical version of Bełżec came about and what level of credibility can be ascribed to it.

In the book *Treblinka*<sup>4</sup> I have described the origins and the development of these sources of information about the Treblinka camp: from the effect of the mysterious “*toxic fluids*” to the “*mobile gas chambers*,” to the delayed-action gas, to the railroad cars sprinkled with quicklime, to the famous “*steam chambers*,” to the vacuum death chambers, to the poisoning by means of “*chlorine gas and cyclon gas*.”<sup>[8]</sup>

In 1946, witnesses imputed even more fanciful methods of murder to the Sobibór extermination facilities; Alexander Pechersky depicts them as

follows:[\[9\]](#)

*“At first sight, one has the impression of entering a bath-house like any other: faucets for hot and cold water, wash basins. [...] As soon as all have entered, the doors are closed with a heavy thump. A heavy black substance comes down in swirls from openings in the ceiling. One hears frantic screams, but not for very long because they change to gasping suffocating breaths and to convulsions. Mothers are said to have been covering their children with their bodies.*

*The ‘bath’ keeper observes the whole procedure through a window in the ceiling. Within a quarter of an hour everything is over. The floor opens and the corpses fall into carts waiting below, in the basement of the ‘bath-house’. As soon as they are full, they move away quickly. It is all done according to the latest German technology. Outside, the corpses are discharged in a certain order and doused with gasoline which is then lit. Right there, they burn.”*

Another witness, Leon Feldhendler, declared:[\[10\]](#)

*“The bath was equipped in a way as if it were really meant to be used for washing (faucets for the shower, a pleasant environment). The baths were places for gasification. [\[11\]](#) Five hundred persons were gassed at a time. Sometimes they released streams of chlorine *[sic]*[\[12\]](#), they always tried out other gases.”*

The themes of chlorine and a sliding floor were subsequently merged into a new version by the witness Zelda Metz, who asserted:[\[13\]](#)

*“[The victims] went naked to the cashiers. They deposited there any money, jewels, and other valuables. The Germans gave them a brass token or simply a number, orally, so that later they would be able to withdraw the money and their belongings. They then entered the wooden building where the women’s hair was cut, and then to the ‘Bath’, i.e., the gas chamber. They were asphyxiated with chlorine.[\[14\]](#) After 15 minutes, they had all suffocated. Through a window it was checked whether they were all dead. Then the floor opened automatically. The corpses fell into the cars of a train passing through the gas chamber and taking the corpses to the oven. Before being burnt, their gold teeth were extracted. The oven was an enormous open-air furnace with a grid.”*

The version of murder by means of exhaust gas from an undefined “engine” was only made official from 1947 on.[\[15\]](#)

Propaganda stories that are no less fantastic were told of Bełżec as well;

we shall examine them in the following paragraphs.

## 2. Extermination by Electricity

In the stream of information on the Belzec camp which emerged during the Second World War, the alleged system of murder later to be embraced by the official historians – gas chambers using the exhaust gas from a diesel engine – does not appear at all. Instead, we find all manner of methods, not only diverse in nature, but in part quite fantastic.

The first reports of Belzec appeared on April 8, 1942, a few weeks after the opening of the camp:[\[16\]](#)

*“Among the Jews terrible desperation. We now know that every day there is a train arriving at Belzec from Lublin and one from Lvov, each with twenty cars. The Jews must get off, are taken behind a barbed-wire fence and murdered by an electric current[\[17\]](#)<sup>1</sup> or poisoned with gas[\[18\]](#)<sup>1</sup> and then the corpses are burnt[\[19\]](#)<sup>1</sup>. ”*

The electrocution tale appears also in the “chronicles of an unknown author,” said to have been unearthed in that camp in 1953:[\[20\]](#)

*“Sadism in the years 1940–1941*

*At Belzec, near the Soviet border, there was a camp which surpassed even Auschwitz in terms of sadism. For example, Jews were arrested every day, forced to dig a deep and narrow ditch and were then thrown into it one at a time. Then each prisoner was forced to go to the toilet on the head of the victim. Anyone refusing received 25 lashes. In this way, they went to the toilet all day long until the victim finally suffocated in the feces.*

*The Soviet border guards, on the other side, asked the Jews to try to escape to the Russian zone if at all possible. Anyone able to make use of a moment of inattention by the SS would succeed, because the SS, when they noticed this, could no longer shoot – the bullets would have hit the other side of the borderline. Then the SS took up a position next to the fence, shooting at the hands or feet still sticking out on their side, and when the Soviet border guards protested, the SS shouted, ‘The hand or the leg is still on our side!’*

*At that time, the work to be done was to dig a long and deep trench along the borderline. Later, when the Germans had penetrated deep into the USSR, 8 large barracks were built in the forest, equipped with tables and benches. The Jews from Lublin and Lvov were pushed into them and*

electrocuted.”[21]

On July 10, 1942, the Polish government in exile in London received the following report:[22]

*“According to information from a German who is employed there, the place of execution is at Belżec, near the station, and is surrounded by barbed wire. Inside as well as around the fence, Ukrainians are on guard duty. The execution is done in the following way: A train full of Jews, after arriving at Belżec station, moves on a siding toward the fence which surrounds the place of execution. There is a change of crew. Beyond the fence, the train is handled by German personnel up to the point of unloading where the rails end. Once discharged, the men go into a barrack on the right, the women into one on the left, to undress, supposedly for taking a bath. Then the groups go together into a third barrack with an electric plate[23]<sup>1</sup> where the execution occurs. The bodies are then taken by means of a railway to a pit, about 30 meters deep, situated outside the fence. The pit was dug by Jews who have all been killed. The Ukrainian guards who are assigned to the camp are to be murdered once the action is over. The Ukrainians on guard duty have lots of stolen money and jewelry: They pay 400 zloty for a liter of vodka, or 2,000 to have sex with a woman, and give her jewels.”*

On November 15, 1942, Dr. Ignacy Schwarzbart, a member of the Polish National Council, made a declaration, in which he paraphrased the above report:[24]

*“The methods applied in this mass extermination are, apart from executions, firing squads, electrocution and lethal gas-chambers. An electrocution station is installed at Belzec camp. Transports of settlers arrive at a siding, on the spot where the execution is to take place. The camp is policed by Ukrainians. The victims are ordered to strip naked ostensibly to have a bath and are then led to a barracks with a metal plate for floor. The door is then locked, electric current passes through the victims and their death is instantaneous. The bodies are loaded on the wagons and taken to a mass grave some distance from the camp.”*

The report dated July 10, 1942, reappears on December 1 in an English-language Polish review:[25]

*“Extraordinary Report from the Jew-extermination Camp at Belzec.*

*July 10th, 1942.*

*According to information from a German employed at the*

*extermination camp, it is situated in Belzec, by the station, and is barred off by barriers of barbed wire. Inside the wire, and all round the outside, Ukrainians are on guard. The executions are carried out in the following fashion: When a trainload of Jews arrives at the station in Belzec, it is shunted by a side track up to the wire surrounding the place of execution, at which point there is a change in the engine crew and train guards. From the wire onward the train is serviced by German drivers who take it to the unloading point, where the track ends. After unloading, the men go to a barracks on the right, the women to a barracks situated on the left, where they strip, ostensibly in readiness for a bath. After they have undressed both groups go to a third barracks where there is an electrified plate, where the executions are carried out. Then the bodies are taken by train to a trench situated outside the wire, and some thirty metres deep. This trench was dug by Jews, who were all executed afterwards. The Ukrainians on guard are also to be executed when the job is finished. The Ukrainians acting as guards are loaded with money and stolen valuables; they pay 400 zlotys for a litre of vodka, 2,000 zlotys and jewellery for relations with a woman.”*

The declaration made by Dr. Schwarzbart was recapitulated ten days later by the bulletin of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in an article entitled “250,000 Warsaw Jews Led to Mass Execution: Electrocuting Introduced As New Method of Mass Killing of Jews.”[\[26\]](#) On December 20, 1942, the *New York Times* ran an article on the alleged extermination of Jews in Poland by the Germans which said, among other things:[\[27\]](#)

*“Actual data concerning the fate of the deportees is not at hand, but the news is available – irrefutable news – that places of execution have been organized at Chelm and Belzec where those who survive shootings are murdered en masse by means of electrocution and lethal gas.”*

In 1944, the story of the electrocution installation at Bełżec was embellished with new and fantastic details. On February 12, the *New York Times* revisited the camp, publishing a more detailed report headlined “Nazi Execution Mill Reported in Poland: Fugitive Tells of Mass Killings in Electrically Charged Vats”:[\[28\]](#)

*“Stockholm, Sweden. Feb. 11 (AP). A young Polish Jew who escaped from a mass execution in Poland with the aid of false identification papers repeated today a story that the Germans operated an ‘execution factory’ in old Russian fortifications in eastern Poland.*



*The Jews were forced naked onto a metal platform operated as a hydraulic elevator which lowered them into a huge vat filled with water up the victims' necks, he said. They were electrocuted by current through the water. The elevator then lifted the bodies to a crematorium above, the youth said.*

*The youth said he personally had seen trainloads of Jews leave Rawna Luska [Rawa Ruska] in eastern Poland in the morning for the crematorium at near-by Beljec [Bełżec] and return empty in the evening. He was told the rest of the story, he said, by individuals who escaped after actually being taken inside the factory. The fortifications, he added, were built by the Russians after they had occupied eastern Poland.”*

In 1944, Dr. Abraham Silberschein, a member of the Polish parliament and delegate of the World Jewish Congress, published, in Geneva, a series of mimeographed brochures entitled *Die Judenausrottung in Polen* (The extermination of Jews in Poland), in which he included even more horrifying propaganda stories. From these, I shall present two reports on the Bełżec camp in their entirety. The first one has the title “*Die Hölle von Belzec*” (The Bełżec Hell):[\[29\]](#)

*“Jews deported to Belzec were ordered to undress, as if they were going to take a bath. They were, indeed, taken to a bathing establishment able to contain several hundreds of people. However, they were executed en masse by means of an electric current. A boy who managed to escape from such an establishment told me what happened after the electrocution: The fat from the corpses was drained in order to – make soap from it.*

*The remnants of the corpses were then thrown into anti-tank ditches which had been laid out along the Russian border by the arch-henchman Major Dollf. Burial of the slaughtered had to be done by the strongest of the Jews, selected among the doomed. It often happened that these people had to bury their own relatives. Not much later, these Jews, too, who had been assigned the task of burying their dead brethren – a task which they did against their will and by being forced – were killed in the same way. The Jews buried at Belzec came mainly from Lublin, Lemberg [Lvov], and other towns in Eastern Galicia. Some 300,000 Jews were interred there.*

*Far too many corpses having been thrown into these mass graves, it was impossible to cover them with a sufficiently thick layer of earth. This caused a stench of rotting flesh to spread over the whole area. This smell*

is still perceptible (i.e. in April, at the time of writing of this eyewitness report). Travelers on the railway line Zawada-Rawa Ruska close the windows, for this awful stench penetrates into the compartments and causes the people to vomit. I myself had to travel along this line on several occasions and have thus been able to convince myself of this state of affairs. As late as April 10, 1943, I passed through there one last time. The Christian population of Belzec has left this place for the only reason of this stench.

The men of the Gestapo and the Ukrainians who commit these murders have magnificently enriched themselves by taking the gold and the jewelry which some Jews had sewn into their clothes. Those butchers had so much money that they were able to pay 20 gold dollars to the farmers for a bottle of vodka.”

The second report published by A. Silberschein was called “*Hinrichtungs- und Vernichtungslager Belzec*” (Execution and Extermination Camp Belzec) and spoke of an undefined “electric oven” as the means of assassination:[\[30\]](#)

“The Victims.

Starting in 1942, so-called actions took place in all Polish cities and towns. Based on a well-defined plan, they were repeated at almost regular intervals and became the horror of the Jewish population. In general, such actions consisted of a number of local Jews being rounded up and deported. The number was often specified in advance, and the local Jewish council was demanded to provide this number. Special commando units were organized for this purpose. They traveled from one town to the next to carry out their hounding of the Jews. The Jews caught in this way were normally taken to the Belzec extermination camp. Without exception, this was the fate of all Jews caught in Eastern Galicia.

Belzec is a little town, formerly a border crossing between Galicia and Poland, situated on the railway line from Lemberg [Lvov] to Lublin. The camp that existed here was a most extraordinary one. While all other camps were officially designated as prison camps, concentration camps, or work camps, this camp was a pure extermination camp. Jews were sent there for this purpose only. It would not be wrong to say that all Jews from Galicia, certainly all who came from Eastern Galicia, died there with the exception of the few who were able to save themselves. However, not only were transports of Polish Jews from Galicia taken there, Belzec was also the destination for many convoys of foreign Jews, in particular

*Jews from Holland and from Germany.*

*Installations.*

*Belzec and its surroundings have become a fortress of the Inquisition as never before seen in the history of mankind.*

*Special buildings for gassing experiments were built here, special factories for the production of soap and shoe polish from Jewish fat, hospitals were built for the purpose of a prior withdrawing of blood transfusions of Jewish children [sic]. Special types of equipment for hanging were devised. Even soldiers of the Wehrmacht would not believe it, but still, those installations were observed by reliable eyewitnesses.*

*Murder Procedure.*

*Not a single one of all the hundreds of thousands brought to Belzec ever managed to escape. We are, therefore, unable to know the details of what was going on inside the camp.*

*According to a German employed there, the camp is protected by a barbed-wire fence and is situated in the immediate vicinity of the station. Within the barbed-wire, Ukrainians are on guard duty.*

*The executions take place as follows: On arrival, the train with the Jews is taken to a siding right next to the wire fence. Then the crew is changed. After unloading, the men are directed to the right, the women into the barrack on the left. They were ordered to undress and to prepare for an end. They then must enter a third barrack, which contains an electric oven. The executions take place in this barrack. After that, the corpses are taken by train to a ditch beyond the barbed-wire fence. The ditch has a depth of some 30 meters. It was dug by Jews.*

*Travelers and tourists who have passed through Belzec have confirmed that the fields all around have become mass graves. At every step one notices traces of lime and gore. The fields are strewn with skeletons in various stages of decomposition. The air reeks with a pestilential stench. Therefore, the farmers in the area have fled from their villages. The town itself is deserted and ghost-like. There is only the occasional SS policeman loitering about, yawning.*

*On the basis of the number of Jews caught during the actions, who were all taken – as previously mentioned – to Belzec, it can be assumed that no fewer than six hundred thousand Jews from Galicia died as martyrs there. Adding the other transports, one can safely say that the*

*number is much higher still, perhaps twice as high.”*

The paragraph relating the method of execution appears nearly word for word, in another book, also published in 1944; here, however, instead of the term “oven” we have “hearth”: *“Then they move on into a third barrack with an electric hearth where the execution takes place.”*[\[31\]](#)

In a book published in Stockholm in 1944 and translated into English and German a year later, Stefan Szende gives the following account of Belżec camp:[\[32\]](#)

*“Belzec was a little place to the north of Rawa-Ruska, just on the 1939 Russo-German frontier. Immediately this frontier line had been agreed on, the Russians had begun to erect fortifications on a big scale. When the German troops crossed the frontier in June, 1941, the fortifications were still incomplete.*

*It was from these half-finished Russian fortifications that the Nazis made their slaughter-house in which millions of Jews were exterminated.*

*To exterminate 5 million people is an enormous task, and even in our age of technical perfection it needs a lot of preparing and organizing, and there are many problems to be faced by those planning to carry it out. Tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands, of Jews had been taken to ‘Pjaski.’ Further tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands had died as a result of ill-treatment, starvation and disease. But there were still millions left and they all had to be killed in accordance with the orders of the Fuehrer.*

*Even the effective killing of bed-bugs or lice on a large scale demands a certain technique. However, no one can doubt that the Germans are a highly talented people in all technical matters. Amongst them there were highly efficient engineers of death. These men were given their instructions by the Gestapo, and they set to work to solve the technical problems to which the mass slaughter of millions of defenseless men, women and children gives rise. They solved the problem. They solved it brilliantly. Their Fuehrer, Adolf Hitler, and Himmler, the head of the Gestapo, must be well satisfied with them and their work.*

*Months of planning and building operations were necessary, but the Germans are a patient people and the objective was worth the time spent on achieving it. The extermination of millions of Jews with the very latest modern technical means -what an enticing aim! Hundreds of thousands of labor hours were expended. Tens of thousands of tons of valuable*

materials were used in the process. But at last, in the spring of 1942, the scientific slaughter-house at Belzec was ready.

The mass-killing installation at Belzec occupies an area almost five miles across. This area is surrounded by barbed wire and every other modern device for keeping prisoners in and others out. No one is permitted to come near the place except properly authorized persons or those who will never leave the place alive. But despite all these precautions there were one or two people who saw the inside of Belzec and nevertheless succeeded in escaping. Despair and desperation makes a man ingenious.

Specially chosen S.S. men guard the Belzec killing plant. They are men without nerves. There is much to do in a slaughterhouse and it gives sadists great pleasure to compel their victims , to do as much of it as possible. For instance, the clothes and the belongings of the millions of victims had to be collected and sorted out. For this purpose the S.S. chose certain Jews out of each transport that arrived. These Jews were not spared, of course. It was merely that their execution was postponed. Two such Jews actually succeeded in making their escape. They escaped into the Ghetto which still existed in Rawa-Ruska at the time. In Rawa-Ruska they reported the details of the technically perfected slaughter going on in Belzec.

As far as I know, no Jew ever succeeded in escaping from Belzec and reaching neutral or Allied territory. The two Jews who made their escape from Belzec to Rawa-Ruska in the summer of 1942 were probably killed subsequently when the Ghetto there was liquidated, but a number of people who heard the evidence of these two fugitives from Belzec did escape. The following description of the Belzec slaughterhouse comes from them.

The trains coming into Belzec loaded with Jews were driven into a tunnel in the underground premises of the execution building. There the Jews were unloaded and ordered to divest themselves of all their things. In 1942 Jews arriving at Belzec came dressed and carrying all sorts of belongings with them. Fully loaded trains from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Holland, France and the Balkan States arrived in Belzec, and they were all treated in the same way. These Jews were told to take all their things with them, as they were going to be 'settled' in the East. Thus tens of thousands of Jews arrived, bringing all sorts of

property with them, typewriters, sewing machines, crockery, silver and so on.

Everything was taken away from them. The goods seized in this way were carefully sorted out, listed and ticketed and subsequently used for the benefit of the master race. It was to spare the staff at Belzec this tremendous task, which, of course, hindered them in their real job, that later on all Jews were sent to Belzec naked.

When trainloads of naked Jews arrived they were herded into a great hall capable of holding several thousand people. This hall had no windows and its flooring was of metal. Once the Jews were all inside, the floor of this hall sank like a lift into a great tank of water which lay below it until the Jews were up to their waists in water. Then a powerful electric current was sent into the metal flooring and within a few seconds all the Jews, thousands at a time, were dead.

The metal flooring then rose again and the water drained away. The corpses of the slaughtered Jews were now heaped all over the floor. A different current was then switched on and the metal flooring rapidly became red hot, so that the corpses were incinerated as in a crematorium and only ash was left.

The floor was then tipped up and the ashes slid out into prepared receptacles. The smoke of the process was carried away by great factory chimneys.

That was the whole procedure. As soon as it was completed, it could start up again. New batches of Jews were constantly being driven into the tunnels. The individual trains brought between 3,000 and 5,000 Jews at a time, and there were days on which the Belzec line saw between twenty and thirty such trains arrive.

Modern industrial and engineering technique in Nazi hands triumphed over all difficulties. The problem of how to slaughter millions of people rapidly and effectively was solved.

The underground slaughter-house spread a terrible stench around the neighborhood, and sometimes whole districts were covered with the foul-smelling smoke from the burning human bodies.”

A variant of the underground extermination was published in the infamous *Black Book* of the well-known Soviet propaganda writers I. Ehrenburg and V. Grossman, compiled in 1945 and 1946. A certain corporal (*Obergefreiter*) Erik Heubaum, a German prisoner of war, is said to have declared in a

statement, about which no particulars are given, not even a date:[33]

*“I have even seen how peaceful citizens were exterminated by means of gas. I drove some communications people to a minor station some 12 kilometers from Rawa Ruskaya. Near that station, in the middle of a forest, an underground encampment had been set up. One day, when I was there, a convoy of Jews was brought in. From closed cars, people were stretching their arms out the windows begging for water, but nobody was allowed near them. In the evening, these people were led into the forest. Anyone not involved was moved to the station building. The forest was surrounded by SD units. Then all of these people, without any distinction of age or of sex, had their clothes taken from them and were pushed into the underground encampment. Three quarters of an hour later, men from a different section were sent in to take out the corpses before another group was brought in. In this way, each night, up to three hundred people were killed.*

*I observed that scene over a period of eight days. An SS man from Saxony, Karl Horst, told me that those people were being asphyxiated by means of gas. He took part in this. The executions were directed by Sturmbannführer [major] Herbst, who came from Breslau.”*

But even the story of the descending or collapsible floor took on further variations. The files of the Soviet commission of inquiry for the Sokal territory, dated October 7, 1944, contain is the statement of a certain Rozalja Schelewna Schier:[34]

*“My husband, who was working at the Bełżec station at the time, told me the following:*

*At Bełżec station two transports consisting of fifty to sixty cars arrive every day. Each car holds 100-120 persons. The train is taken to a siding in the forest, about one kilometer away. There a movable shed has been placed on the rails. It is marked ‘Baths for Jews.’ The people who have arrived are ordered to undress and enter the baths; they are promised work afterwards. When the bath house is completely full with 100-120 people, gas and high-voltage electric current are fed into it. Within 5 minutes, all the people in the bath house were dead. Inside the shed, the floor folds automatically, and the corpses fall into a previously dug trench where the victims are doused with a flammable liquid and burnt.”*

A year later, the extraordinary collapsible floor at Bełżec has changed again. On October 16, 1945, the witness Jan G. declared to the investigative



judge of Zamość:[35]

*“By what means the Jews in the gas chamber were killed is difficult to say. At the time the Jews were driven into the gas chamber, a strong engine (250 HP) was running within the camp. It is said that the Jews were killed by means of the exhaust gas. It is untrue that the Jews were killed by means of an electric current; the voltage was much too low for masses of people to be killed that way. While the extermination camp was in operation, the ‘blacks’<sup>[36]</sup> in my railroad workshop fashioned 48 pairs of special hinges, and a large number of narrow-gauge rails were shaped by bending. From this I conclude that the hinges were used for the floor of the gas chamber, which opened up after the Jews had been killed, thereby letting the corpses drop into carts, which took them to a common grave.”*

In 1945, Dr. Guérin reported on an encounter he had had three years before with a soldier of the Security Police during a round-up of Jews in the ghetto of Rawa Ruska:[37]

*“He then pulled out a map and pointed to the name of a village: Belsetz [sic]. The means of extermination: electrocution. Women, old people, and children were taken on foot, naked, into a hall with metal plates in the floor. When a certain number of people had been assembled, a high-voltage current passed through the plates. The name of Belsetz was confirmed on two occasions by other Germans but none of those we approached was able to confirm that he had personally witnessed such executions. Others held that the executions took place in gas chambers, but here, too, the exact place could not be ascertained.”*

In 1945, Stefan Tadeusz Norwind wrote:[38]

*“Major corpse factories existed at Belzec, at Sobibor, at Majdanek, and also, it is said, at Palmyry in the region of Warsaw.[...] The factories had two types of installations. Some of them were electrical, i.e. naked people were pushed onto a steel plate and then killed by a high-voltage current (this took place e.g. at Belzec). Others consisted of hermetically sealed gas chambers where, again, naked people were killed by means of steam or gas (this took place at Tremblinka [sic]).”*

The story of extermination by means of electricity also appears, with other fanciful details, in the above-mentioned *Black Book*:[39]

*“Belzec is a terrifying place where the Jews were exterminated. And this place is surrounded by the utmost secrecy on the German side. But*

*the railway men who operate the convoys of the condemned tell their family and friends the truth about the extermination of the Jews at Belzec.*

*The Jews were made to go into a gigantic hall, which could take in up to a thousand people. Along the walls, the Germans had strung uninsulated electric wires. The same wires were in the floor. When the hall was full of naked people, the Germans switched on the current. It was a gigantic electric chair, which we never thought could have been invented even by the most warped mind."*

In 1946, Simon Wiesenthal wrote an article with the title "*Seifenfabrik Belsetz*" (soap factory Bełżec), his second of two dedicated to this fanciful topic.[\[40\]](#) In this article he outlined out an imaginary history of the Bełżec camp, crammed with historical falsifications. In January 1942, Wiesenthal says, the Bełżec area was inspected by a commission of top SS officials, among them Adolf Eichmann, whom Wiesenthal promotes to the rank of "SS General" for the occasion! The commission decides to make "*the available installations the starting point for the erection of a place of extermination.*" For this purpose, "*a site of 3 square kilometers*" (300 hectares, or about 750 acres) was fenced in. The area of the camp proper came to about 6 hectares, or about 15 acres. Then comes his description of the alleged extermination procedure:[\[41\]](#)

*"The people, squeezed together by the SS, hounded by the Latvians and Ukrainians, ran into the 'bath' through the open gate. It could hold 500 persons at a time. The floor of the 'bathhouse' was made of metal, and showers hung down from the ceiling. When the space was full the SS delivered a 5,000-volt current to the metal plate. At the same time, the showers spewed out water. A brief scream and the execution was over. An SS surgeon-major by the name of Dr. Schmidt ascertained the death of the victims by looking through a peephole, the second door was opened, the 'corpse commando' arrived and quickly removed the dead. – There was now room for the next load of five hundred."*

### 3. From Electrocution to the “*Trains of Death*”

Another story about Bełżec, widely circulated during the Second World War, concerned the “*trains of death*.” It was invented by Jan Karski (his real name was Koziński), a courier with the Polish government in exile in London, who affirmed that he had visited the Bełżec camp in October 1942, disguised as an Estonian guard, together with a real Estonian guard who had been bribed. Walter Laqueur writes:[\[42\]](#)

*“Karski lived underground in Warsaw in 1941-2, engaged in ‘black propaganda’ among German soldiers, printing and distributing leaflets in German.”*

In fact the story told by Karski is a simple kind of “*black propaganda*.” It was the final product of a well-defined literary development which can easily be traced in the surviving documents. The first version of this story, dating back to November 1942, did mention trains of death, but only as an instrument of torture, taking the Jews from the Warsaw ghetto “*to special camps at Treblinka, Bełżec and Sobibor*,” where they would be killed. With respect to the camp at Bełżec, Karski not only did not yet pretend to have visited it but ascribed to it the method of extermination in vogue at the time – electrocution. However, by December 1942, Karski had invented the story of his phantom visit – disguised as a Polish policeman – to a “*marshalling camp*” fifty kilometers from Bełżec, rehashing ‘the trains of death’ motif, the trains having now become a means of extermination in themselves, although he was still assigning to Bełżec the methods of murder by poison gas and electric current. In the final elaboration of his story, Karski transformed the “*marshalling camp*” into the camp at Bełżec, which he now pretended to have visited disguised as an Estonian guard!

On November 25, 1942, Karski arrived in London and handed the Polish government in exile a report.[\[43\]](#) It was transcribed under the title “*News Is Reaching the Polish Government in London about the Liquidation of the Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw*,” and the complete text of it is as follows:[\[44\]](#)

*“The persecution of the Jews in Poland, which has been in progress from the very first day of the German occupation, has taken on extremely acute forms since March 1942, when Himmler ordered the extermination of 50% of the Jewish population in the Government General, to be carried out by end of 1942.*

*Though the German assassins had started this work with extraordinary gusto, the results apparently did not satisfy Himmler for during his visit to the General Gouvernement in July 1942 he ordered new decrees personally, aiming at the total destruction of Polish Jewry.*

*The persecution in Warsaw started on 21st July 1942, when German police cars suddenly drove into the ghettos. The soldiers immediately started rushing into houses, shooting the inhabitants at sight, without any explanation. The first victims belonged mostly to the educated classes. On that day almost all the members of the Jewish Municipal Council were arrested and held as hostages.*

*On 22nd July 1942 the Jewish Council was ordered to proclaim the decree of the German authorities dealing with the re-settlement of all the Warsaw Jews, regardless of sex or age, in the eastern part of Poland, with the sole exception of persons working in German factories or members of the Jewish militia. The daily quota of people to be re-settled was fixed at 6,000 and members of the Jewish Municipal Council were ordered to carry out the order under pain of death.*

*By the next day, however, on 23rd July, the German police again appeared in the Jewish Municipal Council and demanded to see the chairman, Mr. Czerniakow. After the police had left, Czerniakow committed suicide. From a note left for his wife, it became clear that he had received orders to deliver 10,000 people the next day and 7,000 daily on the following days, in spite of the fact that the quota had been fixed originally at 6,000. The victims to be delivered to the Germans are either dragged out of their homes or seized in the streets. As the zeal of the Jewish police to perform these duties against their own people was slight and did not give a guarantee of efficiency, the Germans have mobilised temporary security battalions for the man-hunts, consisting of Ukrainians, Latvians, and Lithuanians. These battalions, under the command of SS men, are characterised by their utter ruthlessness, cruelty and inhumanity.*

*The Jews, when caught, are driven to a square. Old people and cripples are then singled out, taken to the cemetery and there shot. The remaining people are loaded into goods trucks, at the rate of 150 people to a truck with space for 40. The floor of the truck is covered with a thick layer of lime and chlorine sprinkled with water. The doors of the trucks are locked. Sometimes the train starts immediately on being loaded, sometimes it remains on a siding for a day, two days or even longer. The*

people are packed so tightly that those who die of suffocation remain in the crowd side by side with the still living and with those slowly dying from the fumes of lime and chlorine, from lack of air, water and food. Wherever the trains arrive half the people are dead. Those surviving are sent to special camps at Treblinka, Belzec and Sobibor. Once there, the so-called 'settlers' are mass murdered.

Only young and relatively strong people are left alive, for they are valuable slave labour for the Germans. However, the percentage of these is extremely small, for out of a total of about 250,000 're-settled' only 4,000 have been sent to auxiliary work on the battlefronts.

Neither children nor babies are spared. The orphans from asylums and day-nurseries are evacuated as well. The director of the biggest Jewish orphanage in Warsaw and well known writer Janusz Korczak, whom the Germans had given permission to remain in the ghetto, preferred to follow his charges to death.

Thus under the guise of re-settlement in the east, a mass murder of the Jewish population is taking place. Started on 22nd July 1942, it has been progress ever since. By the end of September 1942 250,000 Jews had been eliminated. The extent of this action is best characterised by a few figures: In the Warsaw ghetto there lived, according the official German statistics of March 1942, about 433,000 people. In spite of the extremely high mortality caused by bad hygienic conditions, epidemics, starvation, executions etc., the number of Jews in the ghetto remained more or less stable, for to replace the dead, Jews from other parts of Europe, Germany, Austria, Holland, were sent to Warsaw. According to information leaking from the Arbeitsamt [Labor Office], only 40,000 people are to remain in the Warsaw ghetto, only highly skilled workers, to be employed in German war industry. The most convincing proof of the dwindling numbers in the ghetto lies in the fact that for September 1942 120,000 ration cards were printed. For October the number issued was only 40,000.

Simultaneously with the extermination of Jews in the Warsaw ghetto, ghettos in the provinces, at Falenica, Rembertow, Nowy Dwor, Kaluszyn and Minsk Mazowiecki are being liquidated. In the district of Wilno only one Jewish community has remained, in the city itself, numbering only 12,000 people. According to news which reached London some time ago the Germans have murdered 60,000 Jews in Wilno, 14,000 in Kowno and

50% of the Jewish population of Lwow; similar news reaches us from cities in S. Eastern Poland, such as Stanislawo, Tarnopol, Stryj.

The methods applied in this mass extermination are, apart from executions by firing squads, electrocution and lethal gas-chambers.

An electrocution station is installed at Belzec camp. Transports of 'settlers' arrive at a siding, on the spot where the execution is to take place. The camp is policed by Ukrainians. The victims are ordered to strip naked, – to have a bath, ostensibly – and are then led to a barrack with a metal plate for floor. The door is then locked, electric current passes through the victims and their death is almost instantaneous. The bodies are loaded on the waggons and taken to a mass grave some distance from the camp.

A large digging machine has been installed recently at Treblinka. It works ceaselessly digging ditches – mass graves for Jews who are to meet their death there. The Ukrainian guards, witnesses of the mass murders, are allowed to keep the money and jewellery robbed from the victims. These bestial murders sometimes take place in the presence of the local non-Jewish population, who are helpless and overcome with horror at the sight of such inhuman violence. What the Poles' reactions to these unspeakable crimes are, is best proved by a pamphlet by the 'Front for the Liberation of Poland', containing a strongly worded protest against the terrible extermination of the Jews. According to the pamphlet, the total number of Jews murdered in Poland since September 1939 exceeds one million."

The text of the report on Belzec is identical to the one by Ignacy Schwarzbart mentioned above, which, however, dates from November 15, 1942, and therefore precedes it by ten days. On November 26, 1942, Richard Law, British Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, wrote in a note that "this morning" two English Jews, Mr. Silverman and Mr. Easterman, had requested an audience to talk "about the extermination of Jews in Europe," and that the latter had presented him with a document, "which was handed to him last night by a member of the Polish Government."[\[45\]](#) But I. Schwarzbart, who was indeed a member of the Polish National Council, was in possession of a portion of the document as early as November 15.

Another portion, the section dealing with the transports of the Jews, appeared with some modifications and with the inevitable reference to the electrocutions in the report of the Polish government in exile at London of



December 10, 1942:[46]

*“The floor [sic] of the trucks were covered with quicklime and chlorine. As far as is known, the trains were dispatched to three localities, Tremblinka [sic], Belzec and Sobibor, to what the reports describe as ‘extermination camps’. The very method of transport was deliberately calculated to cause the largest possible number of casualties among the condemned Jews. It is reported that on arrival in camp the survivors were stripped naked and killed by various means, including poison gas and electrocution.”*

This shows that the ‘mission’ of Jan Karski was, in fact, a “*black propaganda*” operation carried out in style. Sure enough, the story of the trains of death, attributed to a “*courier who reached London in December 1942,*” surfaced in London that December.[47]

This precedes Jan Karski’s version of 1944, which we will examine below, but with one decisive difference. He did not yet pretend to have smuggled himself into the Belzec camp, even though he did visit a marshalling camp situated “*about fifty kilometers from the city of Belzec.*”

In March of 1943, the newspaper *Voice of the Unconquered* published the report in question under the title “*Eye-Witness Report of a Secret Courier Fresh from Poland.*” It also referred to a courier who “*reached London at the beginning of December, 1942.*”[48]

This courier, just like the other one, had brought back “*a personal eye-witness account,*”<sup>48</sup> which was published in the newspaper. The part on Belzec is set forth below, with subtitles added by the editors of the paper:[49]

*“Roads Paved With Dead*

*I want to return to the question of ‘deportations’: I saw in Warsaw the first part of this act and later on the outskirts of Belzec the second and last part. From Warsaw the Jews are driven to the tracks on the outskirts of the city where a long train of cattle cars is already waiting for them. Before they reach the tracks, however, many are shot for one reason or another. Particularly those who lag behind. The whole route is literally strewn with corpses. When they finally reach their destination they are robbed of all their possessions (officially the deportees are urged to take along their most valuable possessions). Then they are loaded in cars, a hundred people in a car, and the first lap of the journey which lasts from two to eight days begin. Not once during the journey are the doors of the cars opened with the result that many die before they reach the ‘sorting*



point' (Obóz Rozdzielczy) which is located about fifty kilometers from the city of Belzec. Nevertheless the first stage of this journey is mild, almost human, in comparison with what awaits them at the second stage.

### Belzec the Slaughter House

In the uniform of a Polish policeman I visited the sorting point near Belzec. It is a huge barrack only about half of which is covered with a roof. When I was there about 5,000 men and women were in the camp. However, every few hours new transports of Jews, men and women, young and old, would arrive for the last journey towards death.

It is humanly impossible to convey the impression that these 5,000 people made upon me: they are no longer in the image of men. Skeletons with eyes dead with resignation. Naked, frightened, they are in constant motion with convulsive, nervous movements. A child is lying with his face towards the roof. It is in the last agony of death. But no one pays any attention to it. I spot amidst this indistinguishable mass an old man completely nude. He was probably stripped of his rags. No one looks at him. He makes no impression upon the people that surround him. The guards keep on shooting at the throng. Corpses are scattered everywhere. Men, in their convulsive moving about, step over them. They hardly notice the dead. Every few minutes the guards pick a number of men to clear the dead which are piled up alongside the fence. This, too, is done without any emotion, without a single expression, in their faces as though they are completely oblivious of what they are doing. These are no longer normal beings but one large convulsive mass breathing its last.

The people are kept in this camp for several days. By the time they start on the last leg of their death-journey most of them have had nothing to eat for days since they are not given any food and have to subsist on whatever they manage to bring along with them.

The second and the most gruesome stage of their journey commences. Accompanied by the lashing of whips and the shooting of guns the 'deportees' are suddenly, without any warning, beginning to be driven to the railroad tracks which are several dozen meters from the camp. A wild stampede of human beings begins. In the meantime, the Germans have made all the preparations to intensify their torture.

The route from the camp to the tracks is a specially constructed narrow passage lined by a weak fence of boards. On both sides of the fence are stationed armed guards. From behind the people are driven by

guards who lash out mercilessly with their whips. Everything is designed to create a panic and stampede. But at the same time 'order' is demanded and no one dare touch the fence. Anyone who as much as touches the fence is shot by the guards who are lined alongside of it. The shooting, the blood and the groans and shrieks of those who have been hit only increases the stampede and this gives the guards additional reason for shooting. In this manner, hundreds are killed on a stretch of several meters. But these are the lucky ones. An even more horrible death awaits the survivors.

The narrow passage leads to an open door of a cattle car. These are the famous cars designed for '40 people or 8 horses.' We have measured these cars and found that if human beings were to be loaded there tightly pressed together and completely nude they could hold only 90. Yet 140 people are loaded in these cars. On both sides of the entrance are stationed special S.S. men with guns and whips. It is their job to force the people into the cars.

#### In Area of 50 Kilometers Corpses of Jews Are Being Burned Day and Night

In panic and fear the emaciated skeletons perform acrobatic feats. A moment comes when the last inch of a car is loaded to capacity. But human beings are still being driven into it: *einsteigen, einsteigen!*<sup>[50]</sup> People begin to climb over the heads of their neighbors holding on by the hands, feet or hair of those who are already inside. Thus fifty more manage to get into the car which is then locked. Soon another takes its place...

A long train thus packed with several thousand men, women, and children is switched to a side line where it remains from two to eight days. The doors are never opened. Those inside suffer inhuman agony. They have to perform natural functions over the heads of the others. Many cars are painted with lime which begins to burn from the dampness of the urine and increases the tortures of the barefooted and nude.

Because there are not enough cars to kill the Jews in this relatively inexpensive manner many of them are taken to nearby Belzec where they are murdered by poison gases or by the application of electric currents. The corpses are burned near Belzec. Thus within an area of fifty kilometers huge stakes are burning Jewish corpses day and night."

In 1944, Karski published a book of memoirs entitled *Story of a Secret*

State. He relates that in early October of 1942 he slipped into the ghetto of Warsaw and established contact with the local Bund, the union of socialist Jews. The head of this organization informed him about the deportation of “over three hundred thousand” Jews into “execution camps.”

The story goes as follows:[\[51\]](#)

*“A few days after my second visit to the Warsaw ghetto, the Bund leader was to arrange an opportunity for me to see the Jewish death camp. The camp was located near the town of Belzec about one hundred miles east of Warsaw and was well-known all over Poland from the tales of horror that were circulated about it. The common report was that every Jew who reached it, without exception, was doomed to death. The Bund leader had never been in it but had the most detailed information on its operations. I was to go on a day when executions were scheduled. The information was easy to obtain because many of the Estonian, Latvian, and Ukrainian attendants who worked there under Gestapo supervision were in service of Jewish organisations. Not from any humane or political consideration, but for money. I was to wear the uniform of one of the Estonians who would stay home while I went in with his papers. [...] Early in the morning of the day we had selected, I left Warsaw in the company of a Jew who worked outside the ghetto in the Jewish underground movement. We arrived in Belzec shortly after midday and went directly to the place where the Estonian was supposed to be waiting to give me his uniform.”*

Karski's story is quite verbose, so I will only quote the essential points. Accompanied by an Estonian guard, he approaches the camp:

*“As we approached to within a few hundred yards of the camp, the shouts, cries, and shots cut off further conversation. [...] We passed through a small grove of decrepit-looking trees and emerged directly in front of the loud, sobbing, reeking camp of death. It was on a large, flat plain and occupied about a square mile. It was surrounded on all sides by a formidable barbed-wire fence, nearly two yards in height and in good repair. Inside the fence, at intervals of about fifteen yards, guards were standing, holding rifles with fixed bayonets ready for use. Around the outside of the fence militia men circulated on constant patrol. The camp itself contained a few small sheds or barracks. The rest of the area was completely covered by a dense, pulsating, throbbing, noisy human mass.”*

Karski then dwells on the description of the crowd, repeating and

enlarging on themes already dealt with in his paper of December 1942, but with an important addition: *“They were all former inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto.”* As in the preceding report about the *“marshalling camp”* located at 50 km from Belżec, Karski mentions the trains of death and the narrow passages the Germans had set up to funnel the crowd into the cars, and then continues:

*“And now came the most horrible episode of them all. The Bund leader had warned me that if I lived to be a hundred I would never forget some of the things I saw. He did not exaggerate. The military rules stipulate that a freight car may carry eight horses or forty soldiers. Without any baggage at all, a maximum of a hundred passengers standing close together and pressing against each other could be crowded into a car. The Germans had simply issued orders to the effect that 120 to 130 Jews had to enter each car.”*

After another digression describing the loading of the victims into the cars, Karski writes emphatically:

*“I know that many people will not believe me, will not be able to believe me, will think I exaggerate or invent. But I saw it and it is not exaggerated or invented. I have no other proofs, no photographs. All I can say is that I saw it and that it is the truth. The floor of the car had been covered with a thick, white powder. It was quicklime. Quicklime is simply unslaked lime or calcium oxide that has been dehydrated. Anyone who has seen cement being mixed knows what occurs when water is poured on lime. The mixture bubbles and steams as the powder combines with the water, generating a large amount of heat. Here the lime served a double purpose in the Nazi economy of brutality. The moist flesh coming in contact with the lime is rapidly dehydrated and burned. The occupants of the cars would be literally burned to death before long, the flesh eaten from their bones. Thus, the Jews would ‘die in agony’, fulfilling the promise Himmler had issued ‘in accord with the will of the Fuehrer’, in Warsaw, in 1942.<sup>[52]</sup> Secondly, the lime would prevent decomposing bodies from spreading disease. It was efficient and inexpensive – a perfectly chosen agent for their purposes.”*

After three hours, the forty cars of the train filled with Jews started to move. Karski continues:

*“My informants had minutely described the entire journey. The train would travel about eighty miles and finally come to a halt in an empty,*

*barren field. Then nothing at all would happen. The train would stand stock-still, patiently waiting while death penetrated into every corner of its interior. This would take from two to four days. When quicklime, asphyxiation, and injuries had silenced every outcry, a group of men would appear. They would be young, strong Jews, assigned to the task of cleaning out these cars until their own turn to be in them should arrive. Under a strong guard they would unseal the cars and expel the heaps of decomposing bodies. The mounds of flesh that they piled up would then be burned and the remnants buried in a single huge hole. The cleaning, burning and burial would consume one or two full days. The entire process of disposal would take, then, from three to six days. During this period the camp would have recruited new victims. The train would return and the whole cycle would be repeated from the beginning.”*

Even if Karski’s account, in its various literary layers, is a simple fabrication, someone tried to improve on it, arguing that Karski had simply been wrong, that instead of visiting Bełżec he had gone to Izbica, a place some sixty kilometers farther north.[\[53\]](#) That could be true with respect to the “marshalling camp” of December 1942, but in 1944, as we have seen, Karski spoke specifically of the Bełżec camp:

*“A few days after my second visit to the Warsaw ghetto, the Bund leader was to arrange an opportunity for me to see the Jewish death camp. The camp was located near the town of Belzec about one hundred miles east of Warsaw and was well-known all over Poland from the tales of horror that were circulated about it.”*

This is so clear that the book was published in the US with a leaflet by William Sharp containing four drawings which summarized its contents, the fourth one containing the following explanation:[\[54\]](#)

*“He visited notorious Jewish death camp, disguised as Estonian guard.”*

In 1987, in an interview given to Maciej Kozłowski, a journalist with *Tygodnik Powszechny*, Karski stated firmly that he had actually entered the Bełżec camp:[\[55\]](#)

*“We went together [with a guide] to Lublin, then changed trains and finally came to Bełżec. It was in mid-October [1942].”*

At this time, Karski added a further lie to his original fabrication:

*“I thought, then, that Bełżec was a transit camp. It was only after the war that I convinced myself that Bełżec was the final point of*

*extermination.”*

In his description of 1944 he unavoidably made serious errors, because, in fact, he had never seen the Bełżec camp. For example, that camp is not “*on a large, flat plain,*” but on the side of a hill, and Estonian guards were never on duty there. Furthermore, the very basis of the story – that the camp guards could be bribed – is in flagrant contradiction to their being described, in the report of July 10, 1942, and others, as having “*lots of stolen money and jewelry*” and being able to pay 20 gold dollars for a bottle of vodka.

That the whole account has been completely invented is evident, by the way, from its basic premises. In October 1942, in order to investigate how the deportees from the Warsaw ghetto were allegedly exterminated, Karski allegedly went – on the specific instructions of the head of the Bund – not to Treblinka but to Bełżec! And at a point in time at which the first wave of deportations has been over for a month, he ‘sees’ there crowds of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto! Thus, if Karski’s fable were to be convincing, it would be necessary for the Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to have been deported to Bełżec via Izbica! With total disregard for the intelligence of the victims of his fabrications, Karski did not even go to the trouble to check the location of Bełżec. He places it at a distance some 160 km east of Warsaw, whereas in reality it is nearly 300 km to the south-east of the Polish capital.[\[56\]](#)

The whole story invented by Jan Karski has fallen into disrepute among official historians (despite isolated paroxysms),[\[57\]](#) but not the man himself, who enjoyed high regard among the official historians until his death in July 2000.[\[58\]](#) As Theodore O’Keefe has correctly said:[\[59\]](#)

*“few alleged eyewitnesses to the Nazi ‘extermination’ camps have been as influential, and as honored, as Jan Karski.”*

Thus the *Enzyklopädie des Holocaust* has an entry on Karski which, however, puts in doubt the acceptability of his testimony:[\[60\]](#)

*“It is not quite clear whether Karski, disguised as a guard, actually did view the mass murder in the Bełżec extermination camp, as he later wrote.”*

In Western countries, on the other hand, he was always careful, enjoying the mendacious fame of being an ‘eye-witness’ of the ‘extermination camp’ at Bełżec, to give support to the official story by his presence or his signature, without, however, detailing his ‘testimony.’ With the complicity of the official historians, he became the guarantor of the alleged exterminations in the gas chambers of Bełżec, for which the exhaust gas from a diesel engine

was allegedly used. In this role he appeared, for example, in an Italian broadcast[\[61\]](#) and in Claude Lanzmann's famous film *Shoah*. In these Karski tells about his various 'missions' during the war, but without ever mentioning the Bełżec camp.[\[62\]](#)

Here is another striking example. In 1997 J. Karski wrote the foreword to the new edition of a translation of Rudolf Reder's book about Bełżec, which had first appeared in 1946,[\[63\]](#) needless to say without giving the slightest hint of his alleged visit to that camp.[\[64\]](#) Fraud in league with buffoonery!



#### 4. The “*Soap Factory Using Human Fat*” at Belżec

Even before the Second World War had ended, the legend of a factory established at Belżec for the manufacture of soap from the corpses of the allegedly exterminated Jews was being circulated.

A report sent on August 30, 1942, by the Geneva Office of the Jewish Agency for Palestine to the US government and forwarded by the latter to the Holy See on September 26, 1942, contains the first germs of this legend:[65]

*“Liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto is taking place. Without any distinction all Jews, irrespective of age or sex, are being removed from the Ghetto in groups and shot. Their corpses are utilized for making fats and their bones for the manufacture of fertilizer. Corpses are even being exhumed for these purposes.*

*These mass executions take place, not in Warsaw, but in especially prepared camps for the purpose, one of which is stated to be in Belzek [sic[66]].”*

As we saw in section 1, by 1944 the legend of a factory for human soap at Belżec had already started to take shape, and was disseminated in its initial form by A. Silberschein. In fact, the reports on Belżec mentioned above state that in this camp *“the fat from the corpses was drained in order to – make soap from it”* and that the Germans had set up *“special factories for the production of soap and shoe polish from Jewish fat.”*

This juicy story then appeared in the *Black Book* in the following form:[67]

*“In another place, still in the Belzec camp, there was a soap factory. The Germans selected the fattest people and killed them to make their soap. Arthur [Israelevitch] Rosenstrauch, a bank clerk from Lvov to whom we owe this report, even held a bar of this ‘Jewish soap’ in his hands. The Gestapo bandits did not deny the existence of such a ‘factory’. When they wanted to scare a Jew, they said to him ‘we will make soap from you.’”*

However, the most enthusiastic storyteller and spreader of this legend of human was none other than Simon Wiesenthal. In 1946, he wrote an article entitled “RIF,” which opened with these words:[68]

*“In the last week of March, the Rumanian press published a unique piece of news: In the little Rumanian town of Folteceeni, twenty boxes of*

*soap were laid to rest in the Jewish cemetery with all the traditional pomp and circumstance of a funeral. The soap had recently been found in a former German army depot. The boxes were clearly labeled ‘RIF – Rein jüdisches Fett’ [RIF – pure Jewish fat]. The boxes were destined for the Waffen-SS, and on the wrappers it said with full and cynical objectivity that the soap had been made from Jewish bodies.”*

In reality, the acronym RIF stands for “*Reichsstelle für industrielle Fettversorgung*” (National office for industrial fat supply) and has nothing to do with human fat, much less Jewish fat, as was also admitted by the Jewish historian Yehuda Bauer in a letter dated January 9, 1991.[\[69\]](#)

Still, Simon Wiesenthal recounts profusely the fantastic story of the alleged manufacture of human fat:

*“Toward the end of 1942, the terrible words ‘transport for soap’ were uttered for the first time! It was in the Government General, and the factory was in Galicia, at Belsetz[sic]. In this plant, between April of 1942 and May of 1943, 900,000 Jews had been used as raw material [...]; certain solids [of the corpses] were separated and sent to northern Germany, and there, a special oil for U-boat engines was produced. The human bones went into the Lemberg bone mill, and there they were turned into fertilizer. [...] What was left, the residual fat, was needed for soap production. In parallel with the human transports, other substances such as soda, kolophonium, and sand were transported as secondary raw materials. The Belsetz plant had a daughter company at Danzig; a portion of the intermediates were sent there. Belsetz was a model plant. Therefore, transports to this location had priority with the Ostbahn [Eastern Railroad]. The plant needed raw materials ... and wheels turned for victory!”*

We see that before he embarked on his lucrative career as a ‘Nazi hunter,’ Simon Wiesenthal pursued the slightly less noble activity of a catcher of lies!

## Chapter II: Origins and Development of the Official Historical Version

### 1. The Struggle between Electric Current and Exhaust Gas

On the eve of the Nuremberg trial, the version of extermination at Belżec by electric current had vanquished the other versions and had been officially adopted by the Polish and Soviet authorities.

In 1945, Dr. Litawski, officer in charge of the Polish War Crimes Office, drafted a report on the alleged German extermination camps in Poland for the coming trial, in which he wrote:[\[70\]](#)

*“The camp of Belżec was situated in the neighbourhood of the railway station and was linked with it by a special track on which the trains carrying arrested Jews were brought close to the barbed wire of the camp. In the beginning only smaller transports of Jews amounting to several hundreds of people were sent to this camp. But early in April 1941 a bigger group arrived, about 5,000 Jews picked up in a street chase in the ghetto of Warsaw.*

*Early in 1942 the first reports have been leaked [sic] out that special electric installations were used in this camp for a quick mass killing of Jews. On the pretext of bathing, completely undressed Jews were brought to a special building called ‘baths,’ whose floor consists of slabs through which flows electric current of high voltage. In this way big masses of Jews were killed; their corpses were cremated or buried in huge common graves.”*

The Polish government, in its official report on the German crimes in Poland, presented by the Soviets as Document USSR-93 at the Nuremberg trial, wrote the following about the camp at Belżec:[\[71\]](#)

*“The camp at Belzec was set up in 1940 to take in deportees, mostly Jewish deportees. By and by, however, it was converted to other ends and used for the execution of countless Jews. In the early months of 1942, reports came in that in this camp, special installations for the mass*

*execution of Jews were being built. Under the pretext that they were being taken to a bath they were undressed completely and pushed into the building. A strong electric current passed through the floor of this building. Thousands of human beings were killed here. The guards plundered and robbed the inmates while they were still alive; after they had been killed they took anything that the Jews had left behind.”*

The following passage from the official report of the Polish government, document USSR-93, was quoted at Nuremberg by the Soviet Prosecutor L.N. Smirnov during the session of February 19, 1946:[\[72\]](#)

*“I end my quotation here, and I call the attention of the Tribunal to Page 136, on the reverse side, of the document book; this is from a report of the Polish Government, which shows that the Camp Sobibur<sup>[73]</sup> was founded during the first and second liquidation of the Jewish ghetto. But the extermination on a large scale in this camp really started at the beginning of 1943. In this same report, in the last paragraph on Page 136 of the document book, we may read that Camp Belsen [sic] was founded in 1940; but it was in 1942 that the special electrical appliances were installed for mass extermination of people. Under the pretext that the people were being led to the bath-house, the doomed were undressed and then driven to the building where the floor was electrified in a special way; there they were killed.”*

On the other hand, the investigations conducted toward the end of 1945 and in early 1946 by Regional Investigative Judge Czeslaw Godzieszewski of the court at Lublin and by the prosecutor of the Zamość court, Jan Grzybowski, who interrogated dozens of witnesses, not only did not determine what the alleged method of extermination had been, but managed to create total confusion in this regard. In fact, the indirect witnesses who reported hearsay mentioned a jumble of various methods of execution without, however, being able to state which one was the actual or the prevailing one. For example, on October 14, 1945, the Pole Eugeniusz G. declared:[\[74\]](#)

*“Being afraid for my own life, I did not ask the ‘blacks’ who worked in the extermination camp at Belzec by what means the Jews were killed. In general, people said that in the Belzec camp the Jews were annihilated by means of gas, others thought that electric current was used, others still maintained that they were killed in a chamber from which the air was pumped out for them to suffocate.”*

And on March 20, 1946, another Polish witness, Edward F., gave the following deposition:[\[75\]](#)

*“They [the Ukrainians on duty in the camp] told me that several hundred Jews at a time were crammed into the barrack, where they were killed by an electric current; their corpses were then taken to the trench by means of a narrow-gauge railway.”*

However, the final blow to the determination of the presumed methods of extermination came from the only self-styled eyewitness: Rudolf Reder.

On April 11, 1946, the Zamość prosecutor issued a report with the title *“Report on the results of the investigation in the matter of the extermination camp at Bełżec,”* in which he summarized the results of his investigation. On murder method, he wrote:[\[76\]](#)

*“It was impossible to determine what had been the method of killing of the people in the gas chambers. In particular, we could not ascertain whether the pipes which linked the engine with the gas chambers served to blow a gas into the chambers, to compress the air in the chambers, or to pump air out of the chambers. The witness Rudolf Reder, who worked in the camp at the time of the murder of the Jews, has stated that, while he was indeed on the ramp [next to the gas chambers] at the moment the doors were opened immediately after the people in the chambers had been killed, he never noticed any particular smell. The corpses in the chambers showed no unnatural discoloration. They had the appearance of living persons; usually their eyes were open. The air in the chambers, on opening, was pure, transparent, and odorless. In particular, there was no smell of smoke or of engine exhaust.”*

Rudolf Reder was a Jew born at Dębica on April 4, 1881. From 1910 onwards, he lived at Lvov as a manufacturer of soap. He was interrogated as a witness by Judge Jan Sehn on December 29, 1945. He stated that he had been arrested in his city on August 16, 1942, and taken to Bełżec the following day. On arrival, the entire transport of some 5,000 persons was completely annihilated in an extermination building containing six chambers, except for eight persons, including the witness. They had responded to a request by one of the SS for specialist workers and had come forward, exactly eight persons out of 5,000! As the witness was already 61 years old at the time, it is not clear how he could have been selected for work. After a stay of more than three months in the camp, during which he miraculously stayed alive by various strokes of good luck, he no less miraculously managed to

escape and stay in hiding until the Red Army arrived. He described in detail the alleged extermination building and added:[77]

*“I am not in a position to say precisely what chemical process was used to murder the people in the chambers at Bełżec. I know only that from the engine room a pipe, one inch<sup>[78]</sup> in diameter, went to each of the gas chambers. Those pipes had their outlet in the individual chambers. I cannot say whether any gases were fed through those pipes into the chambers, whether they compressed the air in the chambers, or whether the air was pumped out of the chambers. I was often on the ramp at the moment the doors were opened, but I never smelled any odor, and on entering a chamber right after the doors were opened I never felt any ill effects on my health. The bodies in the chamber did not show any unnatural discoloration. They looked like live persons, most had their eyes open. Only in a few cases were the corpses bloodstained. The air in the chambers, when they were opened, was pure, transparent and odorless. In particular, there was no smoke from the exhaust gas of the engine. The [exhaust] gas was evacuated from the engine directly into the open air, and not into the chambers.”*

In 1947, the *Glówna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich w Polsce* (Central Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland) came to a dishonest finding on the method of murder to be attributed to the Bełżec camp. In the article “*The Bełżec extermination camp*” that appeared in the official bulletin of the commission, Eugeniusz Szrojt wrote:[79]

*“It has not been possible to ascertain for how long the execution chambers, in the construction of which the witness Kozak was employed, functioned. However, there is no doubt that the chambers in the new building mentioned by witness Reder were functioning in August of 1942. Nonetheless, within a span of two months, during which the camp did not operate – the period between the middle of May and the middle of July – the new building was put up, a more solid and more spacious building for mass murder of the victims in order to be ready for the major operation of the liquidation of the Jews in the Government General, which had been scheduled for the autumn.”*

Szrojt was referring to two items from the evidence given by Stanislaw Kozak and Rudolf Reder, whom he called “*the two most authoritative witnesses in this respect.*”[80] Neither item in evidence explained what had been the alleged method of extermination. We shall deal with the deposition



by the former in section 3 below. The latter piece of evidence is nothing but the statement given by Reder before Judge Jan Sehn on December 29, 1945, already mentioned!

Despite this, Szrojt adds, a few pages on:[\[81\]](#)

*“All of the witnesses who have testified on this point – except one – agree that the Germans killed by means of the exhaust gases from an engine set up in the execution building. The gases from the engine were fed into the chambers through special pipes with outlets in the chambers.”*

This was a lie on several counts. First of all because, as we have seen, none of the witnesses had named this method of murder as the only or at least the prevailing method. Second, because Szrojt equates self-styled eye-witnesses and witnesses who had never set foot into the camp and who uttered only hearsay. Third, because *“the two most authoritative witnesses in this respect,”* Kozak and Reder, in fact had not mentioned this method, and fourth, because Reder had categorically ruled it out when he declared:

*“The [exhaust] gas was evacuated from the engine directly into the open air, and not into the chambers.”*

In 1948, in a subsequent official publication of the Polish government (which had given official sanction to high-voltage current as the murder method three years earlier), asphyxiation with carbon monoxide produced by the exhaust gas of an engine became ‘history’:[\[82\]](#)

*“With the victims in the gas-chambers, the final stage of the liquidation process commenced. The doors were securely locked behind the victims who were closely packed in the chambers. The engine was started up and carbon monoxide introduced into the chambers through special exhaust pipes. In a few minutes the cries of the suffocating people died down and after 10-15 minutes a special team of Jews opened the outer doors of the chambers.”*

Elsewhere, the so-called ‘Gerstein report’[\[83\]](#) monopolized the attention of historians as soon as it was published and very quickly became the cornerstone of the proof that the alleged extermination camp at Bełżec (and, in the process, at Treblinka) was historical fact.

In a separate study of Treblinka, I have explained why and when the new method of murder by means of exhaust gases superimposed itself, in a textual process, upon the old method of steam and was elevated to the status of historical fact.[\[84\]](#) In this development, the decisive element, not only in the choice of exhaust gas as a method, but also for the type of engine that would



produce it, was the ‘Gerstein report.’

At this point we should examine this most important point more closely. On January 30, 1946, Assistant General Prosecutor of the French Republic Charles Dubost presented to the Nuremberg tribunal a group of documents, classified as PS-1553, which included a report in French signed by Kurt Gerstein and dated April 26, 1945.<sup>[85]</sup> The report, in which Gerstein described one of his alleged visits to the camp at Bełżec, was not read into evidence, but another version, with the story of the gas chambers running on an engine, was published by the French newspaper *France Soir* on July 4, 1945, with the title “*J’ai exterminé jusqu’à 11.000 personnes par jour*” (I exterminated up to 11,000 persons per day).<sup>[86]</sup> Furthermore, on January 16, 1947, the German translation of Document PS-1553 was presented as evidence at the ‘Doctors Trial’ as Exhibit 428.<sup>[87]</sup>

Thus, at the beginning of 1946, the method of murder described by Kurt Gerstein had officially established itself in Western jurisprudence, and the Polish investigators did no more than follow suit. This, however, created a flagrant contradiction, which the official historiography has since preferred to gloss over: Notwithstanding the similarities between the tales of the two fundamental witnesses, Kurt Gerstein and Rudolf Reder – the most surprising elements of which cannot be verified objectively<sup>[88]</sup> – they differ on a by no means irrelevant point: Gerstein speaks of a “*Dieselmotor*,”<sup>[89]</sup> whereas Reder, just as explicitly, of an “*engine running on gasoline*,” which consumed “*about 4 jerricans of gasoline per day*.”<sup>[90]</sup> Also, in his booklet of memoirs, which came out in 1946, he mentions an “*engine functioning with gasoline*” (“*motor pędzony benzyną*”), which consumed “*about 80 – 100 liters of gasoline per day*.”<sup>[91]</sup> Not to mention the fact that Gerstein attributes the death of the victims in the alleged gas chambers to the exhaust gases of his diesel engine, whereas Reder, on the contrary, states that the exhaust gases of his gasoline engine were vented not into the gas chambers, but into the open air!

When it became advisable to give some more weight to the story of an extermination of Jews at Bełżec and to quote both Reder and Gerstein together, it was sufficient to drop these irksome contradictions and to declare, as does Nella Rost Hollander:<sup>[92]</sup>

“*These two witness reports are nearly identical, therefore they confirm each other!*”

The metaphorical duel described in this section, in its scope and its

outcome, has an importance which goes beyond the single case we have dealt with, because it poses a general problem of historiographical method affecting all the fanciful versions that have circulated about the alleged extermination camps.

Official historiography now accepts that those stories are historically unfounded but tenaciously insists on granting them value insofar as, according to Pierre Vidal-Naquet, they are said to be “*like a shadow cast by reality, like an extension of reality*,”[\[93\]](#) and are thus, in their own way, real!

The problem is that the assumed ‘reality’ said to be casting this “*shadow*” is in itself historically unfounded, because it is based on ‘eye-witness testimonies’ the plausibility of which is exactly equivalent to those that have now been recognized as false. The abandonment of methods of murder prevailing until then (steam at Treblinka, chlorine at Sobibór, electricity at Bełżec) in favor of the new method of exhaust gas from a diesel engine does not relieve anyone of the responsibility of presenting new and decisive documents or evidence, or of new material findings, even if only out of opportunistic motives.

Thus it was necessary for the official historians to adopt a version, which, while maintaining a link with the witnesses, seemed at least superficially more credible, because they could obviously not call propaganda tales bordering on the ludicrous history. On the other hand, the murder method was made uniform for all three camps, as it was unbelievable that three camps under the same German authority were using such wildly differing methods of murder.

By 1965, when the Bełżec trial took place in Munich, the official historical and legal framework had been so firmly established that the defendants, in the hope of minimizing their sentences, could not but accept it unconditionally and proffer painful ‘confessions.’[\[94\]](#)

## 2. Revisions and Contradictions by Michael Tregenza

Michael Tregenza, one of the major specialists on the history of Bełżec, has recently overcome the troublesome contradiction discussed above, in the only way that correct historiographical method requires: by declaring all the key eyewitness testimony inadmissible![\[95\]](#)

But if the two essential testimonies – those of Rudolf Reder and Kurt Gerstein – on which, for all intents and purposes, the official story of Bełżec is based, are inadmissible as evidence, how can one continue to state seriously that Bełżec was an extermination camp? To resolve this problem, Tregenza entangles himself in a contradiction no less troublesome: He rejects the self-styled ‘eyewitnesses’ who testified in 1944 and 1945 in favor of a swarm of minor witnesses who first ‘spoke,’ on his prompting, in the 1990s (*“Gespräche und Interviews mit den Bewohnern von Bełżec”*),[\[96\]](#) and of the defendants of the German Bełżec trial who, as we have seen, testified 20 years after the events and who, for reasons of their defense strategy, confirmed the framework of Bełżec based on the inadmissible evidence of the witnesses mentioned above!

Tregenza then makes several points, from which it is evident that Bełżec was not a ‘shadow’ camp. According to him, everything took place in broad daylight, so that the legends mentioned above could not at all be “*like a shadow cast by reality*.” He writes:[\[97\]](#)

*“Whereas Sobibór and Treblinka lay hidden and isolated and were removed from public view, this extermination camp lay right next to the heavily traveled rail and road links between Lublin and Lemberg, directly next to the village of Bełżec. Fences and watchtowers were clearly visible to the traffic passing through, as well as to the villagers. Thus, it is not surprising that both the camp and what happened inside were known to the local population from the beginning. After all, a group of workers was charged with the construction, which included the first gas chambers.”*

Indeed, what strikes the visitor’s eye most of all is the proximity of the camp to the road (the present national road 17, linking Zamość to Rawa Russkaya and continuing on to Lviv, called Lemberg by the Germans at the time and Lwów by the Poles) and to the railroad from Lublin to Rawa Russkaya.[\[98\]](#) Since the camp was laid out on the side of a small hill, with

the gas chambers of the second phase as well as the mass graves allegedly located in the upper portion, a 3-meter-high fence, even if it had been interwoven with pine or fir branches,[\[99\]](#) would not have prevented anyone from observing all phases of the alleged extermination from some distance. The ‘terrible secret’ of Bełżec would therefore have become known immediately. In this regard Tregenza is even more explicit:[\[100\]](#)

*“From the very beginning, every single villager knew what was going on in the camp. This resulted from the fraternization between the camp staff and the Ukrainian village population, many of whom entertained members of the SS and ‘Trawniki men’ in their homes and were well paid for their ‘hospitality’. This apparently included prostitution as well. Some young women – according to statements by local people – were said to have done so with the ‘Trawniki men’ for jewelry and other valuables. Furthermore, prostitutes from other towns came to Bełżec. In the files of the Polish People’s Police there are indications concerning a number of villagers who served in various departments of the camp SS. In particular, three sisters of the J. family worked in the SS staff kitchen and in the SS laundry which belonged to the B. family. The village bakery, owned by the Ukrainian N. family, provided the daily supply of several hundred loaves of bread for the SS staff, the ‘Trawniki men,’ and the thousand or so Jews working in the camp. A number of villagers took the bread by farm cart to the camp gate. One of them was the Jew Mojesz Hellman, who lived clandestinely in Bełżec under the name of Ligowski. The wages consisted of valuables and cognac.*

*Four men were employed within the camp proper, among them Dmitri N., who checked and repaired the showers and baths of the ‘Trawniki men.’ Mieczysław K. and Waclaw O. worked as mechanics in the garage of the SS or as electricians. The electrician Michał K. installed cables and lighting in the second gas building, the so-called ‘Stiftung Hackenholt’ [Hackenholt Foundation] and is said to have occasionally assisted in the gassings. To the knowledge of the author, this is the only case of a Pole directly [involved] – voluntarily and with pay – in the mass murder of Jews in an extermination camp. It is also worth mentioning that the villagers Eustachy U. and Wojciech I. were not only allowed to own cameras but were even allowed, nay, encouraged, to take pictures of the guards of the extermination camp. Some of the photographs were even taken within the camp. The SS men and the ‘Trawniki men’ would also*

*take pictures of one another and give the films to Wojciech I. for development and printing.”*

Tregenza adds that the 20 men who, according to Kozak,[\[101\]](#) were forced by the SS to build the first gas chamber at Bełżec were in fact paid volunteers:[\[102\]](#)

*“These workers were not forced to build the camp, rather, they were recommended by the village administration and were well paid.”*

In 1961, Heinrich Gley declared during the preparation of the Bełżec trial:[\[103\]](#)

*“In any case, I was frequently ordered to do work outside the camp with a Jewish work detail. The tasks varied in duration, between two and six weeks. They took me as far away as 50 kilometers from the camp.”*

The Polish witness Maria D. had already declared (on October 16, 1945) that some Jews working at the camp *“had the right to leave the camp perimeter.”*[\[104\]](#) And on the previous day the Polish witness Tadeusz M. had stated:[\[105\]](#)

*“There were two groups of Jews employed in the camp: One group worked outside the limits of the camp, the other was not allowed to leave the camp and was charged with the removal of the murdered Jews from the gas chamber and with their burial. These groups were completely isolated from each other. The Jews who worked outside the camp had the right to marry and to write to their families. These letters were opened and any Jews in hiding could thus be found out. For the Jews employed within the camp, the Germans had organized a soccer team and a string orchestra.”*

These descriptions prove, on the one hand, that in Bełżec everyone knew everything about what went on and thus the legends related above had no reason for being other than to serve as propaganda tales; on the other hand they show that the SS at Bełżec had no ‘terrible secret’ to keep and felt so strongly implicated in a monstrous crime that they allowed Polish civilians to enter the camp and take pictures of them!

### 3. Execution Chambers of the First Extermination Building: Narrative Origins and Recent Developments

As we have seen in the preceding section, the testimonies on the alleged execution chambers of the second extermination building at Belżec contain gross contradictions, to which the official historiographers – except Tregenza – have preferred to close their eyes, pretending that these contradictions did not exist. But the only testimony on the alleged execution chambers of the first extermination building not only fails to mention an engine for the production of the lethal gases, but appears technologically inexplicable.

Stanislaw Kozak was interrogated on October 14, 1945, by Regional Investigative Judge Czeslaw Godzieszewski. He declared that, at the end of October of 1941, he was forcibly assigned by the SS to a group of 20 inhabitants of Belżec to work on the camp (for Tregenza, as we have seen, they were volunteers and were well paid). Work started on November 1. These Polish workers built three barracks. The third is said to have been an extermination barrack. Kozak describes it as follows:[\[106\]](#)

*“A barrack, right next to the siding, was 50 m long and 12.5 m wide. It was to be a day room for the Jews selected for work in the camp. The second barrack, measuring 25 m in length and 12.5 m in width, was destined for the Jews going to the bath. Next to it we built a third barrack, 12 m by 8 m. It was split into three rooms by wooden walls, each room thus measuring 4 by 8 meters; they were 2 meters high. The dividing walls were made of wooden boards nailed to either side, the space in between being filled with sand. On the inside, the walls of the barrack were covered with cardboard; the floors and the walls up to a height of 1m and 10 cm were covered with sheets of galvanized steel. From the first to the second barrack, which I mentioned above, there was a passage 3 m wide and having a barbed-wire fence, 3 m high, on either side. Part of this fence, toward the siding, was covered by means of pines and firs that had been specially cut down for the purpose of making the siding invisible.*

*A covered passageway led from the second to the third barrack; it was about 2 m wide and high and had a length of some 10 meters. This aisle led to the corridor of the third barrack; there were three doors for access to the three parts of the barrack. Each part had a door on the northern side, about 1.80 m high and about 1.10 m wide. These doors, as well as*



*those from the corridor, were tightly sealed with rubber. All the doors of this barrack opened toward the outside. The doors were very strong, made from planks three inches thick and protected against being pushed open by a wooden bolt that would be placed into two hooks specially mounted for this purpose. Each of the three rooms had waterpipes at a level of 10 cm above the floor. Furthermore, on the western wall of each part of the barrack water pipes ascended vertically to a level 1 m above the floor, ending with an opening directed into the room. The elbowed pipes on the walls of the barrack were connected to the pipes running below the floor. In each of the three parts of the shed we set up ovens weighing about 250 kilograms. One may assume that the elbowed pipes were later connected to the ovens. The ovens were 1 m 10 cm high, 55 cm wide and 55 cm deep. Out of curiosity I looked into an oven through the oven door. I did not see any grids. The inside of the oven seemed to be lined with refractory bricks. I did not see any other openings. The oven door was oval in shape and had a diameter of some 25 cm placed about 50 cm above the floor. Along the north side of this shed, at a level of 1 meter, a wooden ramp had been built next to a narrow-gauge track which led to the trench in the far corner of the northern and eastern limit of the extermination camp, which had been dug by the 'blacks.' [...] After we had finished building the three barracks just described, the Germans released us from work on December 22, 1941."*

The most surprising thing in this account is that the SS, after making the 20 Poles build the alleged homicidal gas chambers and the auxiliary barracks, had no qualms about sending home the holders of this 'terrible secret'![\[107\]](#) In addition, Kozak's story is incomplete since it lacks the fundamental element: the means by which death was to be inflicted. The story is even more mysterious because of the presence of an oven – without a grid, but with a refractory lining! – in each of the three rooms: What was the purpose of these ovens? Yitzhak Arad reports the testimony of Kozak without comment,[\[108\]](#) and that is very telling.

It is clear that Kozak, called upon to testify after the end of the war about the 'extermination camp' at Belzec, reinterpreted his experience of 1941 accordingly and consequently distorted what he remembered. This is the only way to explain the strange mixture of divergent elements in his account. As Jean-Claude Pressac underlined in 1995, the description given by Kozak corresponds, in fact, more closely to a disinfestation unit[\[109\]](#) than to an

extermination site:[\[110\]](#)

*“Instead of a homicidal installation, one ought to accept the hypothesis of three delousing stations set up at Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka, whose purpose was prophylactic hygiene and the fight against typhoid fever.”*

Other historians have, on the contrary, tried to explain Kozak’s description within the framework of official historiography, adding on fancifully. The first to do so was the witness Michał Kuśmierczak, who, while being interrogated by Regional Investigative Judge Godziszewski on October 16, 1945, made the following statement:[\[111\]](#)

*“One of the ‘blacks’ told me that they killed the Jews with the exhaust gases produced by a 250 KV[sic! KW] engine, or rather asphyxiated them in this way; the motor was said to have been hidden 3 m below ground, at a distance of 30 m from the chamber. The exhaust pipe measured 7 inches in diameter and fed into pipes 2 1/2 inches in diameter. As soon as a transport of Jews arrived at the station, the engine was started up.”*

Recently, this incredible story has been taken up by Tregenza, who has drawn a map of the camp at Belżec with a phantom-like “gassing engine in pit” and an “underground gas pipe.”[\[112\]](#) But why place an engine in a pit, 30 m from the ‘gas chambers,’ and hook it up to them with an underground pipe? An impenetrable mystery!

#### 4. The Number of Victims of the Alleged Gassings

On September 22, 1944, while being questioned by the Soviet prosecutor for the region of Lvov, Rudolf Reder declared that 3 million people had been murdered at Bełżec.[\[113\]](#) On April 11, 1946, the Polish prosecutor at Zamość, T. Chróściewicz, summarized in a report the results of his investigations on the Bełżec camp and wrote on the subject of the number of victims:[\[114\]](#)

*“The total number of transports of Jews taken to Belzec amounted to some 500, with 439 having come from the direction of Rawa Ruska and 57 from the direction of Zawada. The average number of persons in one transport was 3,500. Multiplying this figure by the number of transports, i.e. 500, and adding the 100,000 persons taken to the Belzec camp by trucks, one can arrive at a total number of some 1,800,000 persons who were murdered at Belzec.”*

In 1947, the Central Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland set the number of alleged victims for this camp at 600,000; this figure then passed into official historiography and is almost unanimously accepted even today, although it is based on an absolutely arbitrary method of computation. The assumption was that from March 17, 1942, until the beginning of May and from July until the end of September, or 133 days, one transport per day comprising 40 cars each with 100 persons per car on average, thus 532,000 persons altogether, had arrived at the camp, and that in October, November, and December there had been two transports per week of 4,000 persons each – another 96,000 arrivals – thus bringing the total number to 628,000, or roughly 600,000 altogether.[\[115\]](#) On the number of transports there was no document whatsoever; everything was derived from the testimony of the eyewitnesses, the most precise of whom had been Eustachy Ukraiński, who had spoken of 500 transports and 1,800,000 victims.[\[116\]](#) This testimony had appeared so convincing to the prosecutor of Zamość that in his report of April 11, 1946, as we have seen, he made it the basis of his calculation of the number of victims. At the time, a number of alleged victims in the millions was being bandied about,[\[117\]](#) with a corresponding number of transports attested to by the witnesses. Therefore, a computation of 600,000 victims, with no basis whatsoever in the eyewitness

testimony, was, for all intents and purposes, arbitrary and unfounded.

The Central Commission's finding was really a clear attempt to justify, one way or another, the figure mentioned as mere conjecture by Abraham Silberschein in 1944:[\[118\]](#)

*“On the basis of the number of Jews rounded up during the actions, who, as mentioned above, were all taken to Belzec, it is to be assumed that no fewer than six hundred thousand Jews from Galicia suffered a martyr's death there.”* (emphasis added)

In its verdict in the Belzec trial, the Munich Jury Court asserted the following:[\[119\]](#)

*“Between March and May 1942 at least 90,000 persons and between July and November 1942 (after the erection of the permanent gassing building) at least 300,000 persons came to their deaths in the Belżec extermination camp.”*

But Adalbert Rückerl says in a note:<sup>119</sup>

*“In Polish publications the total number of persons murdered at Belzec is given as 600,000. However, recent estimates by the historian Dr. Scheffler, based in particular on transport documents, arrive at an even higher figure.”*

During the 1960s, Tatiana Berenstein tried to make the conjectures of the Central Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland more consistent in her study *“Extermination of the Jewish Population in Galicia (1941-1943),”* in which she asserted that at Belzec some 550,000 Jews from Galicia had been murdered.[\[120\]](#) The article was accompanied by tables full of data on the deportations of the Jews, based almost exclusively on testimony.[\[121\]](#) The figure adopted by Berenstein corresponds to 87.5% of the total of presumed victims adopted by the Polish investigative commission, without the roundings (i.e. 628,000); the percentage of transports coming from Galicia, as indicated by the prosecutor of Zamość, is practically identical: 87.8% (439÷500). Arithmetically speaking, we have  $628,000 \times 439 / 500 = 551,384$ , i.e. about 550,000!

In this way, Polish historiography, in its arbitrariness, tried to justify the arbitrary findings of the Polish judiciary. This work was brought further along by Arad. In spite of the fact that his tables of deportations to Belzec – which are not substantiated by documents – came to a total of about 517,000 deportees,[\[122\]](#) he nonetheless pretended to prove the official figure of 600,000 victims.[\[123\]](#)

Robin O’Neil has gone far beyond his predecessors, affirming that at Belżec 800,555[124] persons were murdered. The list of transports that he used is, however, to a great extent the fruit of his imagination. Recently, Michael Tregenza has become even more radical; he writes:[125]

*“Officially, we speak today of ‘at least 600,000 murdered persons,’ but on the basis of more recent research and diggings one has to assume a considerably higher figure – possibly up to one million.”*

Actually, neither the new research nor the Polish excavations have brought forth even the slightest indication as to the number of victims of the camp’s alleged gas chambers; indeed, the figure stated by Tregenza is based entirely on old testimony:[126]

*“‘The Central Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland’, in 1945, came to the conclusion that the Belżec camp operated for a total of 133 days and that over this period transports of 40 cars with some 4,000 Jews arrived at the camp each day. This corresponds to a minimum number of 532,000 victims. Later estimates assumed a minimum of 680,000 Jews that arrived at the camp. During the period with the highest number of gassings, in August and September 1942, there were three or more transports daily, frequently with over sixty cars, each car containing at least 100 persons. This amounts to a daily number of some 12,000 victims. Rudolf Reder, a survivor of the camp, has confirmed this figure. Other witnesses, among them the personnel at Belżec station, claim that on certain days 15,000 or more Jews had arrived at the station. However, not all of them were gassed the day they arrived. If, for this period of fifty days, we add another 5,000 per day (to the 4,000 victims mentioned above) we would arrive at a total of at least 930,000.”*

This figure is therefore not based on new documentary sources but on new historiographical aberrations: It is, in fact, composed of the old unfounded figure of 532,000, arbitrarily raised to 680,000, plus the new arbitrary figure of  $(5,000 \times 50 =) 250,000$ !

Elsewhere, Tregenza, relying on such sources, committed a historiographical blunder of his own, because the testimony that 12,000 to 15,000 deportees arrived at Belżec each day was tailored to the propaganda schema of the immediate postwar years, of 2 to 3 million victims; the role of the witnesses was precisely to substantiate such figures.

To justify his raising the ante on the number of the victims, Tregenza invokes another argument that is even less consistent:<sup>126</sup>

*“There is much disagreement on the subject of the number of pyres at Bełżec. Witnesses from the village state that up to five pyres were in use, whereas SS personnel spoke of two pyres during the judicial proceedings in Munich in 1963/1964. According to their indications, at least 500,000 people were burned on those pyres. Assuming that a minimum of 500,000 corpses were burned on two pyres, one has to assume, for five pyres, a much higher figure – possibly twice as high – than the 600,000 persons officially assumed so far.”*

In this way Tregenza not only attributes more value to the declarations of “witnesses from the village” of Bełżec than to the results of the proceedings of the trial at Munich, he also arbitrarily selects from these declarations those that mentioned a higher number of pyres![\[127\]](#)

But then he himself realizes the absurdity of what he has just written and says:<sup>126</sup>

*“It is difficult to conceive that within such a short span of time – in only nine months – so many people could have been murdered under the supervision of not more than fifteen SS men.”*

Indeed.

According to German sources, the number of Jews deported to Bełżec was 434,508.[\[128\]](#)



## Chapter III: Witnesses and Defendants

### 1. The Witnesses Kurt Gerstein and Rudolf Reder

For several years now revisionist historical criticism has been demonstrating that the two fundamental witnesses to the assumed extermination of Jews at Bełżec – Kurt Gerstein and Rudolf Reder – are totally untrustworthy. Since the middle of the 1980s, the so-called ‘Gerstein report’ has been analyzed either by myself<sup>[129]</sup> or by Henri Roques;<sup>[130]</sup> I also studied Rudolf Reder during that period.<sup>[131]</sup> As we have seen in the preceding chapter, the two testimonies contain glaring contradictions, in particular on the essential point of the technique used for the gassings. This, together with other contradictions, absurdities, and incongruities, has led Michael Tregenza to a total and unconditional acceptance of revisionist positions:<sup>[132]</sup>

*“At the end of 1945, only seven surviving Jews were known to have survived Bełżec,<sup>[133]</sup> one of whom was murdered a year later at Lublin by Polish anti-Semites. Of these seven survivors, two – Rudolf Reder and Chaim Hirszman<sup>[134]</sup> – testified to the mass murder in court after the war. Only Rudolf Reder, the most famous survivor, published a brief account of his experience in Krakow in 1946.*

*Judged in the light of what we know today, the two reports are contradictory and contain inconsistencies. Reder, for example, spoke of 3 million victims and gave false dimensions regarding the mass graves and the camp. He stated that Rumanians and Norwegians had been involved in the exterminations, which is incorrect, and he mentions an undocumented visit to Bełżec by Himmler. Hirszman, too, exaggerated the number of victims, speaking of 800,000 victims between October and December of 1942; he spoke of roll calls, which Reder, for his part, discounted; he spoke of children being thrown into the gas chambers over the heads of the women, which is improbable considering the height of the ceiling in the chambers.*

*Further information regarding Bełżec is limited to the frequently mentioned report of the SS officer Kurt Gerstein, the ‘Gerstein Report.’*

[...]

*Based on the current state of our research, we must also designate Gerstein's material on Bełżec as questionable, even belonging to the realm of fantasy in some places. He gave erroneous dimensions for the mass graves, the number of guards he mentioned is too high, he assigned twenty to twenty-five million victims to Bełżec and Treblinka, he described the camp commander Wirth as 'a frail and small man from Swabia' (in reality, Wirth was tall and broad-shouldered), etc. In contrast to Gerstein's statements we must assume that he spent more than two days in the Bełżec camp. As he indicated to another witness,<sup>[135]</sup> he was present there on several occasions. As has been ascertained by later investigations and statements, all three eyewitness reports regarding the Bełżec camp must be considered to be unreliable."*

It is no longer worth our while, therefore, to insist on the value of these two testimonies, which the leading official specialist on Bełżec has now called "*nicht zuverlässig*" (not reliable).

The devaluation of these witnesses has, however, forced Tregenza to reevaluate other minor witnesses, starting with Dr. Wilhelm Pfannenstiel and the accused in the Bełżec trial. We shall consider them in the following sections.

## 2. The Witness Wilhelm Pfannenstiel

In the various versions of his report, Gerstein had mentioned Dr. Wilhelm Pfannenstiel, asserting that the latter had accompanied him on his trip to Belzec. At the end of the war, the “*French Charges against German War Crimes*” section of the United Nations War Crimes Commission issued an arrest warrant, in which, on the basis of what Gerstein had written, Gerstein himself was considered a suspect (“[...] *and the name of the author of the report, Kurt Gerstein, who pretends to have fought this policy of atrocities*”). [136] Pfannenstiel was counted among the “*German leaders responsible for having ordered the policy of extermination of the detainees in various camps by means of gas chambers.*” [137] His name followed, in sequence, those of Hitler, Himmler, Eichmann, and Günther! [138] The charge was the violation of article 302 of the penal code, which carried the death penalty. After being arrested by the Allies, Pfannenstiel was interrogated as one of the accused in the IG Farben trial (August 1947 to June 1948) on the subject of his relations with Gerstein, whose report of April 26, 1945, (PS-1553) had already been submitted as proof of the charges and accepted by the tribunal in the Doctors Trial. In order to save his skin, he tried to wriggle his way out, ‘confirming’ that he had been present at a gassing with exhaust gas from a diesel engine, but denying that he had ever been at Belzec or Treblinka: [139]

“Q. *Of what other concentrations camps did you know that they conducted gassings? You were also at Treblenka[sic]?*

A. *I do not know that at all.*

Q. *Belczek?[sic]*

A. *I have heard Belczek being talked about.”*

Pfannenstiel’s ‘confession’ on the subject of the alleged gassing is very significant in view of the circumstances under which it was made. It was the first interrogation which the accused underwent, as is clear from its opening: [140]

“*Pfannenstiel is sworn in.*

Q. *I could have interrogated earlier, but I waited until I had more material against you.”*

During the interrogation, out of the blue, the prosecutor von Halle asked Pfannenstiel: [141]

“*Do tell us about the scene you have witnessed, won’t you, with this*

*diesel engine, how many chambers were there?”*

The only previous reference by Pfannenstiel to the gassings had been:  
[\[142\]](#)

*“Q. I want you to tell the truth about what happened at Lublin.*

*A. I have told you the absolute truth. I learned later that at Lublin gassings were carried out with auto-gas.”*

Hence the gassings “with auto-gas” had happened at Lublin and not at Belzec, and Pfannenstiel had not been present there with Gerstein, because he learned about them “later.”

Still, Pfannenstiel, without at least asking – as would have been logical – to which “scene” von Halle was referring, was eager to reply, contradicting himself:[\[143\]](#)

*“A. There were – I believe – six chambers in a slightly elevated building.*

*Q. The people inside were naked and squeezed together?*

*A. Yes, the chambers were being filled one by one.*

*Q. Were there any children?*

*A. Yes.*

*Q. How was the diesel exhaust introduced?*

*A. From a 1,100 HP engine. The exhaust pipes went into the individual chambers.”*

It is thus obvious that von Halle knew the Gerstein report, at least superficially, and that Pfannenstiel not only knew it, but also knew that von Halle did! And from such a scenario of intrigue the only result could be this kind of Kafkaesque interrogation!

In 1949, Kurt Gerstein’s story was debated at the trial of Gerhard Peters, the former director of the DEGESCH company,[\[144\]](#) distributor of Zyklon B; it found a wide echo in the German press under Allied command.[\[145\]](#) But Pfannenstiel, in spite of having been acquitted on all counts by the Allied tribunals, still had to face the final hurdle of the German legal system. When he was interrogated by the Darmstadt district court on June 6, 1950, he was still a defendant, but by the next time (November 9, 1959), Pfannenstiel had become an important witness, and he would appear in this role at the Belzec trial of 1965.[\[146\]](#) At that time, he began his career as the official guarantor of the truth of the Gerstein report, much to the benefit of the growing German historiography on the Holocaust. Pfannenstiel did not have to wait long for the results. He was acquitted for lack of proof in three proceedings against

him by the prosecutor at Marburg on Lahn (a small act of gratitude on the part of the leaders of the judiciary), and all passages placing him in a bad light were expunged from the first official German publication of Gerstein's report of May 4, 1945, prepared by historian Hans Rothfels in 1953 (a small act of gratitude on the part of historiographers).[\[147\]](#) It is therefore not surprising that, after 1950, Pfannenstiel would guarantee officially and publicly the admissibility of the Gerstein report (with the exception of the passages regarding himself).

In private, on the other hand, he could allow himself to express what he really thought. This he did in a letter to Paul Rassinier, dated August 3, 1963, in which he wrote:[\[148\]](#)

*“Your assumptions regarding the genesis of his [Gerstein's] report, this most incredible piece of trash in which ‘poetry’ far outweighs truth, and also about his death, are in my opinion quite correct.”*

Since Rassinier suspected that the report was neither true nor authentic and that it was drafted by the two American officers who were the first to interrogate Gerstein, it is clear that Pfannenstiel entirely discounted the veracity of the report. Further along in the letter Pfannenstiel explained that the mentioning of his name in the “*trash*” had caused him serious prejudice, and that in consequence he wanted to avoid at all cost a debate about his person; he asked Rassinier to exercise the greatest reserve regarding his name. And this is quite easy to understand.

The Gerstein report had thus become well known by 1959. In 1951, Léon Poliakov published a long extract of the April 26, 1945, version of the report (PS-1553),[\[149\]](#) which became an official ‘historical document;’ two years later, Hans Rothfels published the German report of May 4, 1945. Pfannenstiel could no longer play on the ambiguities. On the contrary, the “*Bericht vom 26. April 1945*” (Report of April 26, 1945) served as the basis for the interrogation of November 9, 1959, as is evident from the fact that Pfannenstiel expressly mentioned it.[\[150\]](#) During the interrogation, Pfannenstiel also referred to Gerald Reitlinger's book *Die Endlösung*[\[151\]](#) (The Final Solution); he was, therefore, well informed about the historiographical dogma of the time and knew well what he had to say. Pfannenstiel's ‘confirmation’ was no doubt copied from the ‘Gerstein report,’ although he found a way of inserting (on purpose?) additional contradictions and absurdities.

Pfannenstiel declared that he had gone to Lublin together with Gerstein,

and from there to Bełżec, where he witnessed the arrival of a transport of Jews:[152]

*“Several railroad cars were pushed into the camp, containing some 500 Jews – men women and children. [...] I wish to add that some Jews had died along the way. My impression was that the Jews in the cars were squeezed extremely tightly together.”*

Now this is how Pfannenstiel describes the alleged event during the interrogation of November 8, 1963:[153]

*“I observed the arrival of the train of some 12 cars, from which 300 to 500 men, women and occasional children disembarked. Nobody was shot. I saw no corpses being carried out of the train, either.”*

The 500 deportees had thus become 300 to 500, whereas the “children” had transformed themselves into “occasional children.” Furthermore, “some Jews” who had been unloaded dead now disappeared. Furthermore, if the 12 cars making up the transport contained 300 to 500 persons, the average load for each car was 25 to 42 persons, who could surely not be described as having been “extremely tightly squeezed together”!

Gerstein had spoken of 6,700 deportees, of whom 1,450 arrived dead! [154]

Then Pfannenstiel described the first gassing:[155]

*“Once the hair of the women had been shorn, the whole transport was led into a building containing 6 chambers. As far as I know, only 4 were needed that time. When the people had been locked into the chambers, the exhaust gases of an engine were fed into these chambers. Gerstein determined that it took 18 minutes for everything to become quiet in the chambers. [...] Once stillness reigned, the outer doors of the chambers were opened and the corpses brought out, checked for gold teeth, and then piled up in a pit. Again, this work was performed by Jews. No physician was present. I did not notice anything unusual about the corpses. Some were bluish in the face.”*

The “bluish” coloration of the corpses is dealt with (as is the rest) in the Gerstein report: “On jette les corps, bleus, humides [...]”[156] (they throw the blue, wet corpses). As has already been noted, the victims of poisoning from carbon monoxide (contained in the exhaust gases of a diesel engine) have a “cherry-red” or “pink” color,[157] not blue.

Regarding the reasons for his visit to Bełżec, Pfannenstiel declared that at Lublin he had learned that Bełżec was a camp at which Jews were murdered;



he asked Globocnik[158] to be allowed to visit it. The latter, proud of his work, was happy to oblige.[159] Pfannenstiel justifies himself as follows: [160]

*“The reason why I asked at all to be allowed to visit the camp is probably due to a certain curiosity on my part. I wanted to find out, in particular, whether any cruelties accompanied the killing of these people. I considered it particularly cruel that the killing took 18 minutes to accomplish.”*

In contradiction to this, in the interrogation of November 8, 1963, Pfannenstiel declared:[161]

*“On the other hand, if the concept of humaneness can be applied here at all, matters proceeded very humanely.”*

Obviously, this “cruelty” was “very humane,” if only because the duration of the gassing had dropped to 12 minutes in the interrogation of April 25 1960:[162]

*“After some 12 minutes, things became quiet in the chambers. The Jewish crew then opened the doors leading to the outside [...].”*

Furthermore, during the interrogation on November 9, 1959, Pfannenstiel declared he had gone to Lublin with Gerstein on August 17, 1942. This is the first time that he gives a precise date for this trip. Somehow, Pfannenstiel’s memory seems to have become sharper with the passage of time. In the interrogation of October 30, 1947, he mentions no date; in the one of June 6, 1950, he makes the general statement that the alleged event took place “in the summer of 1942”;[163] in that of November 9, 1959, he affirms that he had “gone to Belzec on August 18 or 19, 1942”;[164] and in the interrogation of April 25, 1960, he finally states the exact date of the alleged gassing:[165]

*“If you ask about executions of Jews, I must confirm that I witnessed an execution of Jews on August 19, 1942, in the extermination camp of Belzec.”*

Of course, Pfannenstiel had only reread, more attentively, the Gerstein report. With respect to the objective of the Gerstein ‘mission,’ Pfannenstiel declared:[166]

*“Gerstein had been ordered by Globocnik to take care of the disinfection of the large amounts of clothing that originated at Belzec.”*

No mention at all of a mission to change the operation of the alleged gas chambers. With this simple statement, Pfannenstiel completely destroyed the entire narrative structure of the Gerstein report. What need was there, really,

to send a technician from Berlin on a journey over 700 km with a hazardous load of liquid hydrocyanic acid, merely to disinfest[\[167\]](#) clothing? And where and how would Gerstein have been able to carry out the disinfestation with liquid hydrocyanic acid? Furthermore, during the interrogations of June 6, 1950, onwards, Pfannenstiel had declared that Gerstein *“had already gone to Lublin and Belzec several times before,”*[\[168\]](#) thus inflicting another mortal blow to the story of Gerstein’s alleged ‘mission.’

Here’s how Pfannenstiel described the motivation for his own visit to the Belzec camp:[\[169\]](#)

*“As far as I remember, Globocnik suggested that, as a Professor of Hygiene, I should occasionally go along.”*

Thus, he had not asked permission from Globocnik to visit the camp out of a *“certain curiosity,”* but had been asked to do so by Globocnik himself!

Later, Pfannenstiel would change his story again:[\[170\]](#)

*“At that time, a certain SS Obersturmführer [senior lieutenant] Gerstein, who also belonged to the SS health office in Berlin, was questioned by Globocnik at Lublin about how best to disinfect these large amounts of textiles. Gerstein had recommended a certain product that could be sprayed on the individual layers of clothing. I did not know this product myself. Globocnik also asked my advice, whereupon I told him that it would be best if I could go and have a look at the camp.”*

Obviously, as the *“large amounts of textiles”* were stocked at Lublin, there was no need for Pfannenstiel to go to Belzec, or for Globocnik to give him the permission to visit the alleged extermination camp. Relying, here as well, on the Gerstein report, Pfannenstiel then devised a ‘virtuous’ reason to justify the alleged fact that he had witnessed a ‘gassing:’[\[171\]](#)

*“He [Wirth] asked me whether I wanted to observe such an extermination operation; after a long hesitation I accepted. My aim was, in fact, to report to the SS Reichsarzt [SS surgeon general] about these extermination operations.”*

In the interrogation of November 8, 1963, Pfannenstiel perfected this explanation, asserting:[\[172\]](#)

*“Thereupon I decided to stay in Belzec for the night, so as to be able to report to Berlin about the whole matter from my own observation. At that time, I firmly believed that nothing was known in Berlin about these things.”*

Here we have Pfannenstiel wanting to become another Gerstein and to

inform, not the whole world, but Berlin about the alleged extermination of the Jews! Needless to say, the report by Pfannenstiel to the SS *Reichsarzt*, Dr. Grawitz, took place “orally,”[\[173\]](#) because there is no trace of it. As for Pfannenstiel’s attempt to link this alleged report to the closing of the Belżec camp,<sup>172</sup> there is no documentary evidence of that either.

In the interrogation of November 9, 1959, Pfannenstiel made another statement which is not a little extraordinary:[\[174\]](#)

*“As far as I can remember, the German personnel at the camp consisted of about four persons.”*

Thus the extermination of 600,000 people would have been the work of four SS men!

Later, Pfannenstiel describes the gassing installation:[\[175\]](#)

*“The gas chambers were lined up on either side of the corridor. The corridor itself was 3 m wide. I do not remember exactly the size of the chambers. I think they had a floor area of about 16 sqm. The doors of the gas chambers were equipped with glass windows, through which it was possible to watch what was going on inside. They were not actual windows, only small peepholes. The engine itself was not in a separate room, rather, it stood freely on a podium. It was run with diesel fuel.”*

On the subject of the murder engine, Gerstein had been extremely vague, saying only that it had been “an old Russian diesel engine”;[\[176\]](#) therefore Pfannenstiel had to improvise. He invented its unique location in the open, and showed a double blindness, gross and contradictory, about its horsepower, which he reduced drastically from 1,100 HP during the interrogation of October 30, 1947, to 10 HP in the interrogation of April 25, 1960:[\[177\]](#)

*“The Jews had to enter into chambers in the building, into which were fed the exhaust gases of a 10 HP engine, located in the same building.”*

If we remind ourselves that the diesel engine of the best Soviet tank of World War II, the T 34, had a power of 500 HP, it is easy to judge the value of Pfannenstiel’s declarations.

Moreover, Gerstein’s engine was explicitly labeled “old”; it actually stalled, and it took 2 hours and 49 minutes to get it going.[\[178\]](#) Pfannenstiel’s engine, on the other hand, ran smoothly right away:[\[179\]](#)

*“There was no slowdown due to an engine failure. I would surely remember that.”*

The doors of the alleged gas chambers were equipped with peepholes.

About this, Pfannenstiel declared:[\[180\]](#)

*“The peephole that existed in all the doors had quickly steamed up from the inside, so it was no longer possible to observe anything from the outside.”*

Gerstein, on the other hand, was luckier and could observe the inside of the gas chambers clearly:[\[181\]](#)

*“Another 25 minutes pass. Sure enough, many are now dead. One can see this through the little window in which the electric light illuminates the chambers for a moment.”*

Pfannenstiel also disputes the dimensions of the alleged piles of clothing, 35 to 40 m high, ‘seen’ by Gerstein,[\[182\]](#) which he says were only one tenth as high:[\[183\]](#)

*“The figures advanced by Gerstein are grossly exaggerated. In the report I possess there is a mention of 35 to 40 m in height. These figures are completely false. But even the actual pile of textiles with a height of 3 to 4 m was terrifying enough.”*

Pfannenstiel, for obvious reasons, denied categorically the passages of the Gerstein report which place him a bad light. In the interrogation of June 6, 1950, he said:[\[184\]](#)

*“I know that Dr. Gerstein gives a totally different account of this gassing scene. His account is wrong. It is full of exaggerations. His statement that he believes 25,000,000 people have been dealt with in this way is a typical example.”*

He specifically denied ever having uttered – at least in a derogatory sense – the phrase Gerstein attributed to him: *“like in a synagogue”* with reference to the agonized victims of the alleged gas chambers, and most emphatically denied having gone to Treblinka where – according to Gerstein – he gave a talk praising the extermination of the Jews.[\[185\]](#)

All this is easy to understand, but Pfannenstiel makes another rather more enigmatic statement:[\[186\]](#)

*“Through these [doors] Jewish detainees took out the corpses and threw them into large pits. The corpses were burned in these pits. [...] From my point of view, the incineration of the corpses at the time was still quite imperfect.”*

In the interrogation of April 25, 1960,[\[187\]](#) Pfannenstiel again sets forth his ‘observations,’ this time in greater detail:[\[188\]](#)

*“From the inspection site the corpses were taken directly to deep mass*

*graves that had been dug in the vicinity of the extermination installation. When the pits were rather full, the corpses were doused with gasoline – it may have been some other flammable liquid – and were then lit. I could only determine that the corpses burned just partly. Then another layer of earth was thrown over the corpses and then fresh corpses were placed into the same pit.”*

This ‘observation’ by Pfannenstiel was in contradiction both with his own statements,[\[189\]](#) with the Gerstein report, and with official historiography (G. Reitlinger), and Pfannenstiel realized it full well. This could only be intentional. Why should Pfannenstiel want to deny this tenet of the Holocaust dogma?

The reasons which prompted Pfannenstiel to give official backing to the ‘confirmation’ of the Gerstein report (and to deny it privately later) are easy to understand, and there is no need to dwell on them. The content of Pfannenstiel’s confirmation is totally dependent upon the Gerstein report, its one and only source. Even where he claims to have traveled from Berlin to Belżec together with Gerstein, his statements contain no new or significant element which might actually stem from such an event; they do nothing but echo Gerstein’s statements. In the rare instances in which Pfannenstiel tries to distance himself from Gerstein’s testimony, he ends up talking nonsense, as in the case of the diesel engine’s horsepower. From Pfannenstiel’s account we can draw no new knowledge, no new documentation, no new proof. From the beginning, both the judges and the historians realized the incongruity of the Gerstein report. Thus, for example, León Poliakov’s expurgation of the text he quoted, in the end falsifying it in an essential point.[\[190\]](#) Pfannenstiel’s task was to rescale Gerstein’s report, to eliminate its outrageous exaggerations in order to reduce it to an acceptable nucleus. Today, some official historians, such as Tregenza, consider Pfannenstiel’s testimony more important than Gerstein’s, which is (finally) regarded as inadmissible. But why was Gerstein, if describing an actual event, constrained to provide an account so demented as to render it inadmissible?

On this fundamental point, which could shed light on the actual impetus of the Gerstein reports, the official historiography is silent.

As for Pfannenstiel, his efforts failed: He diminished Gerstein’s acceptability without being able to achieve his own.

### 3. The Belzec Trial

The vagaries of the Belzec trial were summarized by Adalbert Rückerl as follows:[\[191\]](#)

*“The main proceedings against the only defendant still in the dock in the Belzec trial, Josef Oberhauser, lasted a mere four days, from January 18 to 21, 1965. The court interrogated fourteen witnesses. Thirteen of them had been members of the SS or the T4 organization at the time. The fourteenth witness was – as far as could be ascertained – the only one of the victims to have survived the Belzec camp. Among the witnesses were six suspects against whom the penal court had dropped charges. Five of them, as well as another witness, had since become defendants in the Sobibór trial. One of the witnesses was Professor Pfannenstiel, who had, at the time, in August of 1942, visited the Belzec camp together with Gerstein.*

*During these proceedings, the defendant Oberhauser refused any comment regarding the case. He pleaded to having acted under orders and to having been sentenced previously, on September 24, 1948, by the Magdeburg district court for participation in the mass killings perpetrated at Belzec, with subsequent incarceration in GDR prisons on account of this sentence. [...]*

*The criminal section of Munich district court 1 sentenced Oberhauser for aiding and abetting in 300,000 cases of joint first degree homicide, as well as five further counts of aiding and abetting in 150 cases each of joint first degree homicide, to a total of four years and six months penal servitude and loss of civic rights for a period of three years.”*

Aside from Oberhauser, the most important codefendants were Werner Karl Dubois, Erich Fuchs, Alfred Schluch, Robert Jührs, and Heinrich Gley; these, however, soon became mere witnesses.

As we have seen in Chapter II, by 1965, when the Belzec trial was conducted at Munich, the official legal and historical framework in relation to this camp had already been consolidated; hence, in their efforts to minimize their sentences, the defendants were compelled to accept this framework.

What is striking in their depositions – and thus confirms their purely tactical and defensive value – is the extreme vagueness with which they replied to the essential questions regarding the camp: the structure and



operation of the alleged gas chambers, the burial and incineration of the corpses, the transports and the records of the alleged extermination. Nothing new of any substance emerges from their statements. And when, for tactical reasons, something new does appear, it contradicts the official version. This, however, does not disturb official historians like Yitzhak Arad, who, by means of a convenient sleight of hand, manages to create a fictitious ‘convergence,’ where there is, in actual fact, a glaring contradiction.

In the chapter “*Die ‘Aktion Reinhard’: Gaskammern in Ostpolen*” (‘Operation Reinhard’: Gas Chambers in Eastern Poland) in a classic work of the 1980s, Arad writes:[\[192\]](#)

*“Within four weeks, between 17 March and 14 April, close to thirty thousand of the thirty-seven thousand inhabitants of the Lublin ghetto were deported to Belzec. Within the same period an additional eighteen thousand to twenty thousand Jews from the Lublin district were sent to Belzec, among them three thousand from Zamosc, thirty-four hundred from Piaski, and twenty-two hundred from Izbica and other localities.*

*The first Jewish convoy from the Lvov district came from Zolkiew, a town fifty kilometers southwest of Belzec. This convoy consisted of approximately seven hundred Jews and reached Belzec on 25 or 26 March 1942. Subsequently, within the two weeks up to 6 April 1942, some thirty thousand other Jews from the Lvov district arrived in Belzec.*

*Among them were fifteen thousand Jews deported from Lvov during the so-called March operation, five thousand from Stanislawow, the same number from Kolomea, and others from Drohobycz and Rawa-Ruska. Most of those who were sent to Belzec from the district of Lvov during this wave of deportations were classified as ‘unfit for work.’*

*After eighty thousand Jews had been murdered in a major operation that lasted about four weeks, the convoys were suspended. Toward the end of April or the beginning of May 1942, Wirth and his SS men left the camp.*

*Oberhauser made the following statement on the subject:*

*After these first gassings, Wirth and Schwarz, together with all the German personnel, disappeared from the camp.”*

Arad thus makes Oberhauser the scapegoat of the story of the alleged gassing of 80,000 Jews, but the former SS sergeant had said something quite different:[\[193\]](#)

*“The gassings of Jews in the Belzec camp up to August 1, 1942, can be*

*divided into two categories. The first test series covered 2 or 3 transports of 4 to 6 cars with 20 to 40 persons each. On average, 150 Jews arrived with each transport and were killed. These gassings were not yet carried out within the framework of a systematic program of extermination; the aim was to test the capacity of the camp and to determine technically how gassings could be carried out.*

*After these first gassings, Wirth and Schwarz as well as the whole German crew disappeared from Belzec.”*

Oberhauser hence refers to the gassings of 2 to 3 transports of 150 persons each, at most 450 altogether, whereas Arad makes him responsible for the gassing of 80,000 persons!

The Jewish historian was obliged to have recourse to this base deception because the contradiction between Oberhauser’s version and the official one is simply too stark to be reconciled.

Arad’s historical ‘reconstruction’ continues:[\[194\]](#)

*“In mid-May Wirth returned to Belzec. During the latter half of the month two smaller convoys reached the camp, bringing 1,350 Jews from the ghettos of Laszczow and Komarow, near Zamosc.<sup>28</sup> In early June convoys began to arrive from the Cracow district. Three, consisting of five thousand Jews in all, came between 1 and 6 June. A total of eleven thousand more victims, from the city of Crakow and its surrounding areas, reached Belzec between 11 and 13 June. They were followed shortly afterward by another forty-five hundred.”*

Hence, during this period, another 21,850 Jews are alleged to have been gassed. However, Oberhauser had this to say on the matter:[\[195\]](#)

*“For another 6 weeks, things were quiet in the Belzec camp. [...] then there was another test series up to August 1, 1942. During this time, as far as I know, we had 5 or 6 transports consisting of 5 to 7 cars with 30 to 40 persons each coming to Belzec. The Jews of two of these transports were still gassed in the small chamber, then Wirth had the gassing barrack torn down and replaced it with a solid new building with a higher capacity. The Jews of the remaining transports were then gassed in this new gassing building.”*

Thus, according to Oberhauser, the number of gassing victims was at most 1,680, a figure quite different from the 21,850 presented by Arad. In further contradiction to the official version, Oberhauser asserted:<sup>194</sup>

*“Whereas during the first test series and the first two transports of the*

*second test series bottled gas was still used for the gassings, the Jews of the last transports of the second test series were killed with the exhaust gas of the tank engine or truck engine, which Hackenholt operated.”*

This means that the alleged first gassing building was not equipped with an engine for the production of the deadly exhaust gas. With respect to the use of “bottled gas,” Oberhauser gave no details, nor did he describe the new building, the burials, or the burning of the corpses.

The judges did not seem overly worried about these strident contradictions. They asked no explanations of the defendant, and handed everything over to the historians.

The statements of Werner Karl Dubois, who was a driver at Bełżec, are on the other hand rather general. On the question of the alleged gas chambers, he came up with nothing better than:[\[196\]](#)

*“It has just been asked how large the gas chambers may have been or how many persons they would have been able to accommodate. I cannot answer this, in the same way that I cannot say anything about the engine used. I cannot even offer an appropriate estimate. I never saw the gas chambers from the inside. The engine was inside the building in which the gas chambers were located as well. I never saw that engine either.”*

Considering that the camp was rather small and that the SS personnel numbered a dozen men or so, this witness’ statement is curious, to say the least – unless he had never seen the presumed gas chambers from the outside, either.

He had seen something, though:[\[197\]](#)

*“With my own eyes I have seen that a transport consisted of at least 20 and up to 40 cars.”*

*“Some 15 cars for unloading”* entered the camp and *“at least 30 and up to 50 people were transported in one car,”* so that the maximum load of a train would be 2,000 persons, i.e. half the figure commonly accepted.

He relates activities that would not really be in keeping with those of an extermination camp:[\[198\]](#)

*“Thus it happened occasionally that I did clean-up operations in the installations of the former demarcation line with a Jewish work detail. A number of shelters contained equipment still serviceable, such as machine guns, etc. This equipment would be collected and taken to the equipment depot.”*

*“It also happened that I organized a soccer match with 22 Jews on the*

*sports ground; Jews from No. 1 camp were able to watch it under proper guard.”*[\[199\]](#)

The testimony of Heinrich Gley, a former SS *Scharführer* (sergeant), is also rather pallid, except for some details about the incineration of corpses, which I shall consider in chapter V.

His knowledge of the alleged extermination installations of the camp can be judged in the light of the following statement:[\[200\]](#)

*“After the doors of the gas chambers had been closed, a large engine – I don’t know whether it was a diesel or an Otto [gasoline] engine – was started up by a mechanic from the Hiwi [auxiliaries] section. The exhaust fumes of this engine were fed into the chambers and caused the death of the Jews.”*

This means that he did not even know whether the alleged murder weapon was a diesel or a gasoline engine!

Robert Jühls was transferred to Bełżec in August 1942. He, too, offered nothing but general and uninteresting statements, with one exception, which, however, collides with the official version:[\[201\]](#)

*“The corpses from the gas chambers were taken to the burial area not by carts but manually and directly by the Jewish work detail.”*

This signifies that the 600,000 corpses attributed to Bełżec were hand-carried, one by one, to the mass graves!

Karl Alfred Schluch, who had been assigned to Bełżec from April 1942 through August 1943[\[202\]](#) – except for sick leave between October 1942 and February/March 1943 – furnished a more detailed account of the alleged extermination process than did the other defendants:[\[203\]](#)

*“When the Jews had entered the gas chambers, the doors were closed by Hackenholt himself or by one of the Ukrainians under his command. Then Hackenholt started the engine, with which the gassing was carried out. After some 5 to 7 minutes – this is only my estimate – the death of all inside was ascertained by looking through the peephole. Only then were the outer gates opened and the chambers aired [...].”*

The duration of the victims’ agony – even if roughly estimated – is in general too short, even in light of the ‘determination’ of the tribunal, which set it at 15 to 30 minutes.[\[204\]](#) Rather than being an estimate, it is reminiscent of something in the testimony of Stanislaw Kozak, dated February 19, 1946, which had been translated into German and admitted into the trial proceedings:[\[205\]](#)

*“To poison a person, 7 minutes in the ‘bath’ are needed.”*

A novelty worth noting is the ventilation of the alleged gas chambers mentioned by the witness. Taking into account the density of carbon monoxide of 0.967 (relative to air), which is practically equal to that of hydrogen cyanide (0.969), and mindful that killing the victims within 15–30 minutes would have required reaching a lethal concentration of some 5,000 parts per million (5.7 milligrams/liter)[\[206\]](#) within the gas chambers, it would certainly have been necessary to ventilate the chambers or to wear an independent breathing apparatus on entering, but none of the main witnesses ever mentioned this. This witness, however, describes the victims of the presumed gassings thus:[\[207\]](#)

*“After the gas chambers had been ventilated, a Jewish work detail arrived, led by a Kapo, and removed the corpses from the chambers.*

*I was occasionally on duty at this site, and I can thus describe the operations in detail, because I saw and witnessed everything myself.*

*The Jews had been squeezed very tightly into the gas chambers. For this reason, the corpses were not found lying on the floor, rather they stood this way or that, leaning against one another, some forward some backward, depending on the space they had, some kneeling. At least some of the corpses were wet with feces and urine, others with saliva. I could clearly see that some of them showed a bluish discoloration at the lips or the tip of the nose. Some of them had their eyes closed, others’ eyes had rolled up. The corpses were pulled out of the chambers and immediately examined by a dentist. The dentist removed any rings from their fingers and extracted any gold teeth present. The objects of value thus recovered were thrown by him into a carton provided for this purpose.”*

This is copied straight out of the ‘Gerstein report,’ which describes the scene in the following terms:[\[208\]](#)

*“The dead are standing upright, like columns of basalt. [...]*

*They throw out the corpses – wet with sweat and urine, dirty with feces, with menstrual blood down their legs.”*

This is confirmed by the inevitable reference to the “*bluish*” color of the corpses, again taken from the ‘Gerstein report,’ with which I have already dealt above.

It should also be mentioned that people tightly pressed together in a room would not stand upright after they died. Their knees would bend one way or another, and their bodies would thus slump. It is furthermore worth noting

that it would not exactly have been the epitome of German organizational genius to have 600,000 corpses checked by *one* dentist!

The witness then relates the burial of the victims in mass graves:<sup>206</sup>

*“After this procedure, the corpses were thrown into the large pits already prepared. I can state the dimensions of a pit only in a rough way. It could have measured some 30 m in length by 20 m across. The depth is more difficult to guess, because the side walls were at an angle and, moreover, the loose earth had been piled up along the edges. I think, though, that the pit may have been 5 to 6 m deep.”*

The interesting point here – as we shall see in Chapter V – is the mention of the earth removed from the pit and piled up near its edge. The witness says nothing about the total number of pits or the total number of corpses thrown into the pit he refers to.

Schluch claimed to have been on duty at the gas chambers, but in spite of this he did not even know how many there were:<sup>206</sup>

*“How many gas chambers there were at Belcec[sic] I cannot say exactly. There must have been several because, after the gassings, corpses were taken out through the doors both on the left and on the right hand side. Just like any other member of the Belcec staff, I imagine, I inspected the gas chambers. Besides, when we were assigned for duty there, we also had to check the gas chambers.”*

He does know the dimensions of the gas chambers, though:[\[209\]](#)

*“The gas chamber at Belcec may have measured 4 x 8 meters.”*

Here, the poor witness gets mixed up between the dimensions of the new gas chambers and the *old*, just as Kozak did.[\[210\]](#)

Elsewhere, Schluch’s testimony shows another surprising omission:<sup>208</sup>

*“How the gas was fed into the chamber, I can no longer recall.”*

The instrument of murder was a “diesel engine,” but unfortunately K.A. Schluch had not seen it and could not describe it:<sup>209</sup>

*“For the gassings an engine was started up. I cannot give a more detailed description of the engine, because I never saw it. I am not a specialist, but I would say that, judging from the sound, it was a medium-size diesel engine.”*

Erich Fuchs, former SS *Scharführer* (sergeant), explained that he had been sent to Belżec in the winter of 1941:[\[211\]](#)

*“When we arrived at Belcec [sic] we met Friedel Schwarz and two SS men whose names I cannot remember. They were guarding a barrack*



*structure, which we were to equip as a gas chamber.*

*Wirth told us that ‘all Jews were to be killed off’ at Belcec. For this purpose, the barracks [plural in the original German – ed.] were to be turned into gas chambers. I installed shower heads in the gas chambers. These shower heads were not hooked up to a water pipe, because they were only meant as a disguise for the gas chambers. The Jews to be gassed were, in fact, falsely told that they were to be bathed and disinfected.”*

As we have seen above, the witness Stanislaw Kozak stated he built the barrack housing the gas chambers between November 1 and December 22, 1941. Erich Fuchs spoke, on the other hand, of barracks being “*turned into gas chambers.*” Which barracks, if the alleged gassing barrack was a single one? And in what way were these “*barracks [...] turned into gas chambers*”? Simply by equipping them with fake shower heads! Precisely because they were crude fakes, these showers wouldn’t have worked “*as a disguise,*” but would immediately have aroused the suspicion of the intended victims.

Fuchs further testified that he had been present at the gassing of the first transport of Jews, some 1,000 persons, “*in the so-called bath room (gas chamber),*” thus adopting the terminology of the Polish witnesses just as he had accepted the fake showers. He later stated that he had been present at two other transports, without supplying any pertinent details.[\[212\]](#)

In conclusion, the witnesses at the Bełżec trial followed, more or less freely, depending upon their tactical aims, the dictates of the official historiography on Bełżec, founded upon the ‘Gerstein report’ and upon the Polish testimonies of the years 1945/1946. Their statements read like vague summaries of earlier court reports, without adding to these any important new findings. Like the court reports, the testimonies are absolutely devoid of any objective or documentary evidence. These declarations have, no doubt, a legal value – which, however, has nothing to do with a demonstration of the truth or with historiography.

# Chapter IV:

## Bełżec in Polish Archeological Research (1997 to 1999)

### 1. The Mass Graves

In 1997, the Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa (Council for safeguarding the remembrance of struggle and martyrdom) of Warsaw, together with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum of Washington, D.C., decided to undertake archeological diggings within the area of the former camp at Bełżec, with the principal aim of identifying the mass graves described by witnesses. The work was conducted by a team of archeologists from the Nicolas Copernicus University of Toruń, led by Professor Andrzej Kola; it was conducted in phases: in 1997 from October 12 through 25, in 1998 from April 27 through June 6 and from October 25 through November 14, and finally in 1999 from September 12 through 25. The historians Robin O’Neil and Michael Tregenza took part in the project in 1997 and 1998; the latter, on his own account, investigated the area with a metal detector. In 2002, Kola wrote a paper on the diggings entitled “*Hitlerowski obóz zagłady Żydów w Bełżcu w świetle źródeł archeologicznych. Badania 1997-1999*,”[\[213\]](#) published in English under the title “*Bełżec: The Nazi Camp for Jews in the light of archeological sources: Excavations 1997-1999*.”[\[214\]](#) During the research, drilling was conducted out in the designated area at 5 m intervals with a manual drill some 6 to 8 m long and with a diameter of 65 mm. Altogether 2,227 drillings were sunk, and mass graves were identified by 236 of them. The earth samples taken in this way were then analyzed to determine their contents. This research resulted in the discovery of 33 graves in two separate areas of the camp; Kola provides a drawing and a brief description for each of them. He then summarizes his observations as follows:[\[215\]](#)

*“The first zone, probably the older one, contained the graves appearing close to the other in western and north-western part of the camp. [...]. That was probably the place, where they started burying the victims. Generally 21 graves were reported in that area, which makes*

nearly 64% of the whole number in that site. The largest graves were also registered in that part. One can not exclude, however, that several of them (reported as graves of a big volume) were previously some separated smaller ones, which borders mixed either during covering them with soil, covering the traces of the camp up after closing the camp down or result of burglary searches after the war. [...] The other zone of the graves' appearance takes up the north-eastern area of the camp. 12 graves were reported here (about 36% of the total number), with more regular forms (mainly of a rectangle view), which differed from one other in size and appearing in significant scattering. In the area of those graves, transformation of ground, characteristic for the first zone does not occur at all, or very rarely. The other parts of the camp are free from graves. The majority of graves situated here reached the depth between 4,00-5,00 m. One can suppose that those depths were regarded as the optimum ones; underground waters appeared at bigger depths. In the first zone, as we can suppose, connecting smaller neighbouring graves into bigger ones by destroying earth walls separating them was observed. That is why the bigger graves show clearly former original pits. The structures of grave contents in both zones are similarly varied. One can report graves filled with bodies in wax-fat transformation (in bottom parts of the ditches, as a rule), over which there are layers of body ashes and charcoal. Similar structure was reported in 10 graves (No 1, 3, 4, 10, 13, 20, 25, 27, 28, 32). In the rest of the graves in number of 23 only the layers of crematory ashes as well as charcoal placed on a few levels with sandy ground were observed. In non crematory graves, there was often a layer of lime placed over the bodies, which purpose was to quicken the process of decomposition of the corpses. The total surface of the burial pits at the area of the camp amounts about 0,52<sup>[216]</sup> ha, which states barely 9% of the camp territory in the present, enclosed shape.<sup>[217]</sup> The total volume of the graves is estimated for about 21,000 m<sup>3</sup>. The big number contains mainly ashes of bodies, which made killing and burying hundreds of thousands of people in one place possible.”

In the table below I have summarized the details of the dimensions of the graves:

| # | Dimensions [m] | Depth [m] | Surface [m <sup>2</sup> ] | Est'd. volume, [m <sup>3</sup> ] |
|---|----------------|-----------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
|---|----------------|-----------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|

|        |                     |               |            |        |
|--------|---------------------|---------------|------------|--------|
| 1      | 40×12               | 4.80          | 480        | 1,500  |
| 2      | 14×6                | 2.00          | 84         | 170    |
| 3      | 16×15               | 5.00          | 240        | 960    |
| 4      | 16×6                | 2.30          | 96         | 250    |
| 5      | 32×10               | 4.50          | 320        | 1,350  |
| 6      | 30×10               | 4.00          | 300        | 1,200  |
| 7      | 13–14×27            | 4.50          | 364.5      | 1,600  |
| 8      | 28×10               | 4.00          | 280        | 850    |
| 9      | 8×10                | 3.80          | 80         | 280    |
| 10     | 24×18               | 4.25–<br>5.20 | 432        | 2,100  |
| 11     | 9×5                 | 1.90          | 45         | 80     |
| 12     | 6×16×11.50×18       | 4.00          | ~132       | 400    |
| 13     | 12.50×11×17×18[218] | 4.80          | ~200       | 920    |
| 14     | 37×10               | 5.00          | 370        | 1,850  |
| 15     | 13.50×6.50          | 4.50          | 87.75      | 400    |
| 16     | 18.50×9.50          | 4.00          | 175.75     | 700    |
| 17     | 17×7.50             | 4.00          | 127.5      | 500    |
| 18     | 16×9                | 4.00          | 144        | 570    |
| 19     | 12×12               | 4.00          | 144        | 500    |
| 20     | 26×11               | 5.00          | 286        | 1,150  |
| 21     | 5×5                 | 1.70          | 25         | 35     |
| 22     | 9×15                | 3.50          | 135        | 200    |
| 23     | 16×8.50             | 4.00          | 136        | 550    |
| 24     | 20×5.50             | 5.00          | 110        | 520    |
| 25     | 13×5                | 4.00          | 65         | 250    |
| 26     | 13×7                | 4.00          | 91         | 320    |
| 27     | 18.50×6.00          | 5.00          | 540        | 450    |
| 28     | ?                   | ?             | ~17.5[219] | 70     |
| 29     | 25×9                | 4.50          | 225        | 900    |
| 30     | 5×6                 | 2.70          | 30         | 75     |
| 31     | 9×4                 | 2.60          | 36         | 90     |
| 32     | 15×5                | 4.00          | 75         | 400    |
| 33     | 9×5                 | 3.00          | 45         | 120    |
| Total: |                     |               | 5,919      | 21,310 |

The 33 graves thus have a total surface area of 5,919 square meters and a total volume of 21,310 cubic meters.

## 2. Comparison of Research Results with Testimonies and Judicial Findings

### 2.1. Testimonies

As we have explained above, Kurt Gerstein and Rudolf Reder are the two principal witnesses regarding the camp at Belżec. Both of them give a detailed description of the mass graves. In a declaration made before the Jewish historical commission in 1945, Reder stated:[\[220\]](#)

*“A grave was 100 m long and 25 m wide. A single grave contained about 100,000 persons. In November 1942 there were 30 graves, i.e. 3 million corpses.”*

During the interrogation, which was conducted by the investigative judge Jan Sehn on December 29, 1945, the witness strengthened his declaration further:[\[221\]](#)

*“The graves were all dug to the same dimensions and measured 100 m in length, 25 m in width and 15 m in depth.”*

In his famous report of April 26, 1945, Gerstein wrote:[\[222\]](#)

*“Then the naked bodies were thrown into large trenches about 100 by 20 by 12 m, situated near the death chambers.”*

And in the report he wrote on May 6, 1945, he affirmed:[\[223\]](#)

*“The naked corpses were thrown onto wooden carts [and then] into pits only a short distance away and measuring 100 by 12 by 20 meters.”*

One trench thus had a surface area of 2,500 m<sup>2</sup> for Reder and 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> for Gerstein, a volume of 37,500 m<sup>3</sup> for the former and 24,000 m<sup>3</sup> for the latter. However, from Kola's research we can deduce that the largest trench in area (#27) had a surface of 540 m<sup>3</sup>, whereas the most capacious (#10) had a volume of only 2,100 m<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, as Kola has determined, the majority of the trenches had a depth of 4 to 5 meters; below this level there was ground water. Hence, the depth of 12 to 15 meters asserted by the two witnesses could not be confirmed by the diggings. As for Reder's testimony, the total surface area of the 30 graves he claims to have seen in the camp (7.5 hectares) would have covered more ground than the camp itself (6.2 hectares)!

### 2.2. First Judicial Findings

So obvious an absurdity as this was not only accepted but willfully exaggerated by the Zamość prosecutor, who, in his report of April 11, 1946, wrote:[224]

*“All mass graves had the same dimensions: 100 m in length, 25 m in width, and 15 m in depth. The corpses tossed into the graves were covered with lime. Then those piles of corpses were covered up with sand by the detainees. There may well have been thirty, forty, and even more graves of this kind in the camp.”*

In this fashion, Rudolf Reder’s thirty graves became “*forty and even more*”!

## 2.3. The Location of the Mass Graves

Andrzej Kola has made a drawing of the Bełżec camp, with the area of the mass graves marked by vertical shading.[225]

A drawing published by Robin O’Neil shows the actual position of the graves and their peripheries in more detail.[226] The majority of the graves is located along the northwestern border of the camp (on the left in the drawing), some graves are near the center of the camp, and a few lie along the northeastern border (at the top in the drawing).

In 1946 Rudolf Reder wrote a book entitled *Bełżec*, which was published in Krakow by the central Jewish historical commission. On p. 43 of this book there is a map of the camp, drawn by J. Bau according to information from the witness.[227] This drawing – which Kola publishes without comment[228] – is upside down with respect to normal practice. It shows 26 graves along the northwestern border and 6 in the center.

The official map of the camp was drawn by the investigative commission of the German crimes in Poland and appeared in the article “*The Bełżec extermination camp*” by Eugeniusz Szrojt, a member of this group.[229] There, the area of the graves is represented by a rectangle placed near the northeastern border of the camp.

In conclusion, we can see that the location given by Kola for the majority of the graves is in disagreement both with Rudolf Reder’s testimony and with the findings of the Polish investigative commission. Furthermore, an examination of the map of Bełżec as published by Arad[230] forces one to conclude that the quarters of the Ukrainian guards, the hygienic installations (barbers, infirmary, dentists for the SS and the Ukrainians), the kitchen for the Ukrainian guards, the garage, and the shoemakers’ and tailors’ workshops



(shown on the map as numbers 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8) were located right next to mass graves or even on top of them!

These are not the only problems stemming from the location of the graves. Kola's and Robin O'Neil's maps (documents 4 and 5 in the Appendix) show mass graves scattered at random all over the camp, without any particular orientation or order. It is not necessary here to invoke the proverbial German pedantry, which has been well discussed by Rudolf Reder. On his map, in fact, the mythical 30 mass graves all have the same shapes, dimensions, orientation, and are properly arranged in two parallel rows. This is simply a matter of common sense: An orderly arrangement of the graves would obviously have allowed more efficient use to be made of the limited space available within the camp, and a better hygienic protection of the camp personnel. It is no exaggeration to claim that, if the camp commander had had the mass graves dug in such an irregular fashion, he would have been shot for sabotage. Unless, of course, he had peculiar artistic inclinations. Many graves shown by Kola have, in fact, the oddest shapes![\[231\]](#)

### 3. Uncovering the Corpses

#### 3.1. The Findings and Claims of Andrzej Kola

As we have seen above, A. Kola asserts that ten graves (# 1, 3, 4, 10, 13, 20, 25, 27, 28, 32) were “*filled with bodies in wax-fat transformation*,” but then hastens to add that they were located “*in bottom parts of the ditches, as a rule*,” which means that these graves were not, in fact, ‘filled’ with corpses in a state of saponification.

Before we deal with the problem of the number of corpses in these graves, we must first explain what “*wax-fat transformation*” is:[\[232\]](#)

“*[It] consists of the formation of adipocere, an insoluble soap of greasy and oily appearance having an unpleasant odor, produced by the combination of neutral fats from tissue and calcium and magnesium salts present in the water or in the humid soil in which the corpse rests. The absence of air is crucial. The process starts with the subcutaneous tissue and then spreads to the fatty perivisceral tissue. Saponification sets in after a few weeks and is complete after 12 to 18 months.*”

Robin O’Neil, referring to the diggings done during the period between April 28 and June 4, 1998, has proposed a general estimate of the number of corpses:[\[233\]](#)

“*In two of these graves the bodies had not been exhumed and burnt as per the Himmler directive of 1942. How many bodies remain in these two graves is difficult to establish. To be sure, there are many thousands.*”

Michael Tregenza, on the other hand, has been bold enough to name a precise figure:[\[234\]](#)

“*Although it is difficult to attach a figure to the unburnt corpses, a conservative estimate would be on the order of at least 15,000.*”

What is the basis of this estimate? Obviously nothing but the volume of the graves and the thickness of the layer of corpses, but, as we shall see, Tregenza’s estimate is decisively disproved by the actual results of the Polish field work.

The only way to dispel any uncertainty would obviously have been to unearth the corpses buried in the graves – why did the Polish authorities not do this? If the main objective of the archeological research was the identification of the mass graves, why were the corpses buried in these graves not exhumed? When the Germans discovered the graves of the victims of the

Soviet NKVD at Katyn and Vinnytsya, they did not simply drill holes in the ground with a manual drill – they opened the graves, exhumed the corpses, did autopsies, and tried to identify them.

On April 13, 1943, on the basis of information from the local population, the Germans discovered seven graves containing a total of 4,143 corpses of Polish soldiers in the forest of Katyn. Between April and June, the bodies were examined by a commission consisting of physicians from twelve European countries, by a commission of the Polish Red Cross, and by U.S., British, and Canadian officers who were prisoners of war. The Germans then published an official report with the forensic medical findings of the investigation, containing 80 photographs and the names of the victims identified.[\[235\]](#)

The Vinnytsya massacres were discovered by the Germans in the beginning of June 1943. Ninety-seven mass graves were found in three different locations, containing the bodies of 9,432 Ukrainians murdered by the Soviets. Between June 24 and August 25 no fewer than 14 commissions, 6 of them composed of foreigners, visited the mass graves. Again, the Germans collected the results of their findings in a substantial publication: 282 pages with 151 photographs, with forensic medical reports, and victims' names.[\[236\]](#)

Why, then, were the corpses of the mass graves at Belżec not exhumed? The answer is implied in the analyses of the probes taken out during the drillings. In fact, Andrzej Kola publishes the results of 137 samples – obviously the most significant ones of the 236 samples taken altogether – but out of these only two (482/XV-30-60 and 486/XV-25-50) bear the explicit designation “*human corpses*.”[\[237\]](#) The symbol designating “*human bones and wax-fat mass*” – a kind of stylized double X – appears, in addition to the samples just mentioned, only on four more samples (485/XV-30-50, grave 10, 286/XVI-90-40 and 332/XVI-85-40, grave 3, and finally 1042/XIV-45-80, grave 20).[\[238\]](#) The thickest layer is the one belonging to sample 332/XV-85-40 (described as “*tooth/human hair/water/human hair*”), which corresponds to approximately 15% of the depth of the grave ( = 5 meters), thus to about 0.75 meters. Kola further mentions the discovery of corpses in a layer 1 meter thick in grave 27,[\[239\]](#) but without providing a visual representation of the location of the 4 drillings carried out in this location. In any case, the order of magnitude does not change.

In all other instances, the corpse layer is thinner and is always located at

the bottom of the grave. Hence, there are only three graves which contain more or less strongly saponified bodies. Moreover, in the light of the approximating method used by Kola (one sample every 5 meters), strictly speaking one cannot even say that these graves contained a layer of bodies as extensive as their surface area. This becomes evident, at last, in the results of the analyses published by Kola: Human remains are present in 3 out of 7 samples in grave 10, and in 1 out of 5 samples in grave 3 and grave 20. In these, the only three graves containing corpses,<sup>[240]</sup> human remains were identified in 5 out of 17 samples, *i.e.*, in fewer than 30% of these cases. Thus, from all 236 drilling samples, we have only 5 ‘positive’ cases, that is, 2%! What does that mean, apart from any extrapolations? It means simply that the drill, which had a diameter of 65 millimeters ( $\frac{1}{2}$  2.5 inches), went like a lance five times through the remains of three or four bodies; in other words, *in concrete terms*, Kola has discovered 15 or 20 corpses.

Therefore, the only legitimate conclusion one can draw from these samples is that the graves mentioned contained only rare corpses here and there.

Nonetheless, Kola’s book contains a rich photographic documentation of objects found in the area of the camp during the project work. A full 37 color photographs show the most insignificant junk: horseshoes, keys and padlocks, earthenware pots and rusty scissors, pieces of glass and of china, broken combs, glass bottles, coins etc., etc. – but not a single photograph shows a corpse or part of a corpse!

On the other hand, given the small number of drillings, one cannot exclude the presence of other layers of corpses near those identified by Kola; this is even probable. In fact, when one examines the positions of the three samples in grave 10 that indicated the presence of the corpses in a state of saponification, they are found to be concentrated in two small areas at lower left<sup>[241]</sup> of samples 485 to 486 and near 483. This may indicate that originally there were two small graves of 40 to 50 square meters with several layers of corpses at the bottom. The same might be true for samples 286 and 332 of grave 3, which are next to each other within the standard distance of 5 meters along the south-north diagonal of the grave,<sup>[242]</sup> and for sample 1042 of grave 20. One may conclude that the *most probable* interpretation is that the graves contained at most several hundred corpses.

### 3.2. The Polish Findings of 1945

On October 12, 1945, the Regional Investigative Judge of the district court of Zamość, Czesław Godziszewski, presented an *“Account of the diggings in the cemetery of the Belżec extermination camp,”* in which he set down the findings from the inspection of the Belżec camp he had made that day, aided by 12 workers. In this context, he wrote:[\[243\]](#)

*“The opening labeled No. 1 was taken down to a depth of 8 m and a width of 10 m and attained the bottom level of the graves. During the operation, at a depth of about 2 m, we struck the first layer of ash stemming from incinerated human bodies, mixed with sand. This layer was about 1 m thick. The next layer of ash was discovered at a depth of 4 – 6 meters. In the ash removed, some charred remains of human bodies were found, such as hands and arms, women’s hair, as well as human bones not totally burnt. We also recovered pieces of burnt wood. In trench No. 1, the layer of human ash stopped at a depth of 6 meters. The opening labeled No. 2 was taken down to a depth of 6 meters. In this trench, the layer of human ash began at a depth of 1.5 m and continued down to a depth of some 5 m, with occasional breaks. Here, too, the ash contained human hair, part of a human body, pieces of clothing, and remnants of incompletely burnt bones. Openings labeled Nos. 3 and 4 were freed to a depth of 3 meters. In hole No. 4, at a depth of 80 cm, we found a human skull with remnants of skin and hair, as well as two shinbones and a rib. Furthermore, at a level of between one and three meters, these holes yielded human ash mixed with sand and fragments of incompletely burnt human bones. Openings labeled Nos. 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 were dug to a depth of 2 m, but showed only human ash mixed with sand and human bones, such as jawbones and shinbones. Throughout all the excavations it was observed that the camp cemetery had already been disturbed by wildcat diggings; this is borne out by the fact that the layers of human ash are not uniform but mixed with sand. The recovered human bones; the bodily remains, which were in a state of complete decomposition; and the ash were collected in a common location to await the arrival of the district surgeon. Work was stopped at 17:30 hours.”*

The next day, October 13, 1945, the findings were inspected by the coroner. The subsequent report describes primarily the results of the examination performed by the judge and the coroner:[\[244\]](#)

*“During the inspection of the area of the extermination camp, particularly during the excavations at the place of the cemetery on*

October 12, 1945, a large number of human bones were found, such as skulls, parts of skulls, vertebrae, ribs, collarbones, shoulder blades, arm bones, lower legs, wrists, fingers, pelvic bones, thigh bones, lower legs, and foot bones. Some of the bones mentioned are either partly burnt or had not been burnt at all. Except for a few skulls showing rotting scalp and hair, the majority of the bones are free from soft tissue. Among the remains of human bodies recovered on October 12, 1945, we identified two forearms and a lumbar portion of the backbone with some soft tissue and traces of carbonization. The lumbar section belongs to an adult, whereas the forearms come from a child a few years old. From the size of the various bones one can conclude that they belong to persons of different age groups, from two-year-olds up to very old people, as borne out by toothless jaws and numerous dentures. Among the jawbones found there was one partially burnt specimen containing milk teeth as well as incipient permanent teeth, which indicates that it belongs to a person 7 to 8 years of age. No traces of bullet holes or other mechanical wounds were found on the skulls. The long bones show no traces either of gunshot wounds or fractures. Because of the advanced state of decomposition it was very difficult to say to what organs the recovered shapeless portions of soft tissue from human bodies might belong. In a hole dug by the local population in a search for gold and valuables, two lower legs belonging to a two-year-old child were discovered. These members are partly decomposed, partly mummified. The area of the cemetery, in particular the wildcat holes, is covered with layers of human ash of varying breadth, which stem from the incineration of human corpses and wood; they are intermingled with sand in varying proportions. The color of the ash varies between light-ash and dark gray; the ash has a heavy consistency and smells of decomposing human bodies. In the ash, charred human bones as well as pieces of charcoal are clearly visible. In the lower strata of the ash the smell of decomposition is more pronounced than in the layers nearer the surface. The hair discovered belongs mainly to women, as shown by their length and by the type of arrangement (braids and buns fixed with hairpins). In addition to natural hair, we encountered ladies' wigs as well. With this, the inspection was terminated."

The coroner's expert opinion, which comes at the end of the report, reached the following conclusions: The bones found were human in origin and came from a "very large" quantity of corpses; these corpses had been



interred about three years earlier; some of them did not present traces of incineration; and the examination of the skulls and other samples excluded shooting as the cause of death.

The presence of unincinerated corpses within the Bełżec camp area is therefore nothing new. As far as their number is concerned, the Polish coroner's expert opinion gives no specific data, but the general tone of the report and its insistence, in the description, on single bones as if they were unique pieces leaves us wondering about the value one should attribute to the "very large" quantity of corpses conjectured by the coroner.

In any case, the essential problem is not the existence, but the significance of these corpses. In other words: What does their existence prove?

### 3.3. Significance of Corpses Present

All official commentators have interpreted the presence of those corpses as proof of the alleged fact that mass exterminations did indeed take place at Bełżec. As we have already seen, O'Neil sounded that battle cry as early as 1998: The bodies were those of victims from the gas chambers that had not been exhumed and cremated, contrary to Himmler's mysterious order.[\[245\]](#) Thus he has created a circular logic that starts with the assumption that the corpses are those of victims of the gas chambers and proceeds to 'demonstrate,' on the basis of their presence, that the gas chambers did indeed exist! The pretension of these commentators – that the corpses at Bełżec amount, furthermore, to a refutation of revisionist theses – is not only false, it is also grotesque. Of course, no revisionist historian would dream of stating that there were never any deaths at Bełżec. As we shall see in the next chapter, deaths at that camp occurred among the detainees due to epidemics, and due to hard work and misery even before it became – according to the official historiography – an extermination camp. This fact entirely demolishes the interpretation of the official historians by proving that the presence of corpses at Bełżec is not in absolute disagreement with the revisionist thesis. If one really wanted to disprove that thesis, it would be necessary to demonstrate that there are burial sites in the camp containing hundreds of thousands of victims. But if this cannot be done for entire corpses, as we have seen, might it not be true – given that the evidence of incinerations at Bełżec is indisputable – for incinerated corpses at the camp?

To answer this question, it is necessary to ascertain whether the volumes of the mass graves identified by Kola and the amount of ash from human

beings and wood the graves contain are in keeping with the mass cremation of hundreds of thousands of corpses, or, more exactly, 600,000 corpses. We shall examine this in the next section.

## 4. Compatibility of Archeological Research Results with the 'Extermination Camp' Thesis

### 4.1. Cremation of the Corpses

In the chapter "*The Erasure of the Crimes*" of his book on the Operation Reinhardt camps, Yitzhak Arad relates the story of the mysterious order to burn the victims of the alleged German exterminations as follows: In the spring of 1942, Himmler decided on the exhumation and cremation of Jews and Soviet prisoners of war shot by the *Einsatzgruppen* in the occupied Soviet territories. In March, Heydrich discusses the question with SS *Standartenführer* (colonel) Blobel who, in June, is entrusted with that mission (the alleged "*Sonderaktion* [special operation] 1005") by Heinrich Müller, the head of the Gestapo. After some experimentation at Kulmhof, the first exhumation and incineration of corpses is carried out at Auschwitz.

The order is alleged also to have been transmitted to Odilo Globocnik, who, under the direct command of Himmler, commanded the three Operation Reinhardt camps; Arad does not state this explicitly.

In these three camps, the exhumation and cremation activities are said to have started in the summer of 1942 at Sobibór, in December 1942 at Bełżec, and in March 1943 at Treblinka! Why didn't Globocnik obey Himmler's order? The answer Arad provides is astonishingly flimsy: Kurt Gerstein tells us that Globocnik allegedly declared in August 1942 that, instead of erasing the traces of the mass graves, it would be better to commemorate them on bronze tablets inscribed to the effect that it was the Germans who had had the courage to carry out such a gigantic job, and "*for this reason Globocnik did not immediately enforce cremation of the corpses in the Operation Reinhardt camps.*"[\[246\]](#)

Still, says Arad, "*in spite of Globocnik's attitude*" the exhumation and cremation activities were undertaken all the same.

Actually, Arad's story has no historical foundation.[\[247\]](#) The only thing that is certain is that the alleged visit by Himmler to Treblinka, during which he is said to have decided on the cremation of the corpses in there, never took place![\[248\]](#)

We know next to nothing about the cremation of corpses at Bełżec. The Zamość prosecutor, in his report of April 11, 1946, mentioned above, wrote:

[249]

*“A number of tasks in the camp, such as the transportation of the murdered Jews, the digging of graves, the mass burial of corpses in the graves, the sorting of clothes, other objects and valuables left behind by the victims, were carried out by certain Jews staying permanently in the camp. After the liquidation of the camp, these Jews were taken to Sobibór, presumably to be executed. We were able to ascertain that the Jews working in the camp received a food ration of half a loaf of bread per day. In December of 1942, the transports of Jews to the Belzec camp were stopped; the Germans then started to erase systematically the traces of their crimes. The corpses were unearthed with special excavators and burned on piles of wood doused with a flammable mass. Later, the cremation process was improved by using railroad rails to build scaffolds, on which layers of corpses were placed in alternation with layers of wood soaked, as before, with an easily flammable liquid. To separate valuables that the corpses might have contained, the ash of the cremated corpses was passed through a grain separator and then buried again. The cremation of corpses was terminated in March 1943. Then all camp buildings, fences, and watchtowers were dismantled, the area was cleaned, leveled, and replanted with young pine trees.”*

The cremations were thus carried out, apparently, between December of 1942 and March of 1943. The witness Kozak declares in this respect:[250]

*“The disinterred corpses were piled on pyres that were burning and were doused with a liquid. Two or three pyres were burning simultaneously. While this was going on, a horrible stench of decomposed human bodies and burnt human bones and bodies floated over Belzec. This stench could be smelled up to 15 km away from Belzec. The cremations went on without interruption for three months; after that, the Germans started dismantling the camp.”*

On the number of pyres, the witnesses questioned by the Polish judiciary in 1945 gave widely differing answers: For Eustachy Ukraiński[251] there were “mehrere” (several), one for Tadeusz M.,[252] one to three for Mieczysław K.,[253] three for Eugeniusz G.,[254] and Edward F.,[255] three to four for Edward Luczynsky,[256] four to five for Wiktor S.[257]

During pre-trial interrogation for the Belzec trial, Heinrich Gley declared on January 7, 1963:[258]

*“As far as I can remember, the gassings were stopped toward the end*

*of 1942, when we already had snow. Then the general exhumation and cremation started; it may have lasted from November 1942 through March 1943. The cremations went on day and night without interruption, first on one and then on two hearths. One hearth allowed some 2,000 corpses to be burned in 24 hours. The second hearth was erected about four weeks after the beginning of the cremation operation. Thus, on average, the one hearth burned a total of 300,000 corpses over a period of some 5 months, the other 240,000 over some 4 months. Of course, these are only general estimates.” (emphasis added)*

However, during his interrogation on May 8, 1961, he had said something entirely different:[\[259\]](#)

*“The mass gassings of Jews in the Belcec [sic] camp were terminated at the end of 1942. To answer your question, I say that I am sure no corpses were as yet being cremated when I arrived. In the beginning of 1943 – I can no longer say whether it was in January, February, or March – I was ordered to gather, with a work detail, regular and narrow-gauge rails and large rocks. This material was to serve for the construction of large grids, upon which the corpses were burned that had been buried initially. I was not part of the cremation detail.”*

Thus, the cremations would not have started before January of 1943. In section 4.3. we shall examine the consequences ensuing from these declarations.

Yitzhak Arad, one of the major specialists on Bełżec among the official historians, dedicated only one scant page to the question of corpse cremations, in which he refers to H. Gley, to the report of the Zamość prosecutor, and to the statement of seven lines of one Maria Daniel, an insignificant witness who never put her feet into the camp![\[260\]](#)

## 4.2. Capacity of the Graves

On the basis of experimental data, the maximum capacity of a mass grave can be set at 8 corpses per cubic meter, assuming that one third of them are children.[\[261\]](#) Hence, the alleged 600,000 corpses at Bełżec would have required a total volume of  $(600,000 \div 8 =)$  75,000 cubic meters. The average depth of the graves identified by Professor Kola is 3.90 meters. Assuming a layer of earth 0.3 m thick to cover the graves, the available depth would be 3.60 meters.[\[262\]](#) It follows that the burial of 600,000 corpses would have required an effective area of  $(75,000 \div 3.6 =)$  approx. 20,800 square meters.

On the other hand, the surface area of the graves identified by Kola is 5,919 square meters and their volume 21,310 cubic meters, theoretically sufficient to inter  $(21,310 \times 8 =)$  170,480 corpses – but then where would the other  $(600,000 - 170,480 =)$  429,520 corpses have been put?

### 4.3. Wood Requirements

The cremation of a corpse of 46 kg (average assumed weight, including allowance for presumed children) requires about 160 kg of firewood.[\[263\]](#) To burn 600,000 corpses, one would therefore have needed  $(600,000 \times 160 =)$  96 million kg of wood, or 96,000 tons; this corresponds to the harvesting of 192 hectares of a 50-year-old fir forest,[\[264\]](#) about thirty times (!) the surface of the Bełżec camp. Photographs taken of Bełżec from the air, published by John C. Ball, show that in 1944 the forests around the Bełżec camp were the same as in 1940.[\[265\]](#) So where would this immense quantity of wood have come from? Its transportation would have required some 19,000 trucks or over 3,800 freight cars, the equivalent of 95 trains of 40 cars each! However, none of the numerous local witnesses interrogated by the investigative judge of Zamość between the end of 1945 and the beginning of 1946 ever saw such an enormous flow of trucks and/or trains full of firewood.

As we have seen in section 4.1., according to the findings of the Polish courts the cremation of 600,000 corpses went on without interruption for three months, from December 1942 through March 1943. This corresponds to an average of 6,650 corpses per day! For each and every day about 1,064 tons of wood – over 42 freight cars or over 200 trucks – would have been needed.

### 4.4. Duration of the Cremations

No witness has described the structure of the pyres or the technique of cremation. Assuming that the pyres were identical to those allegedly used at Treblinka, the corpses would have been cremated on two or three grids made of railroad rails and measuring 90 square meters each.[\[266\]](#) Let us assume that there were three grids. The amount of wood which can be burnt per square meter of such a grid is approximately 80 kg per hour,[\[267\]](#) hence  $(90 \times 80 =)$  7,200 kg per hour for one such grid, or 21,600 kg/h for three. This means that in order to burn the 1,064 tons of wood which were needed every day, the time taken would have been  $(1,064,000 \div 21,600 =)$  49 hours of continuous combustion. If we add another day for the cooling of the pyre, the



removal of the ash, and the construction of a fresh pyre, the cremation of 6,650 corpses would have taken no less than three days, and the whole undertaking would have stretched out over at least 9 months. The cremation would, therefore, not have ended in March of 1943 but in September of that year!

If, on the other hand, we assume only two grids, the cremation would have lasted more than 13 months!

## 4.5. The Ash

The incineration of a corpse in a crematorium oven yields about 5% of ash having a specific gravity of 0.5.[\[268\]](#) For a cremation in the open air the quantity of ash goes up considerably. The wood burnt produces about 8% of ash with a specific gravity of 0.34.<sup>266</sup> Therefore, the alleged 600,000 victims would have left behind  $(600,000 \times 45 \times 0.05 =)$  1,350,000 kg or 1,350 tons of ash, with a volume of  $(1,350 \div 0.5 =)$  2,700 cubic meters, whereas the wood ash would have amounted to  $(96,000 \times 0.08 =)$  7,680 tons, corresponding to about 22,600 cubic meters. Altogether then, some  $(1,350 + 7,680 =)$  9,030 tons or  $(2,700 + 22,600 =)$  25,300 cubic meters of ash would have resulted from the enormous incinerations.

However, the total volume of the graves identified by Kola is 21,310 cubic meters. Thus, even if all of the graves had been full to the brim with ash unmixed with sand, there would have been  $(25,300 - 21,310 =)$  about 4,000 cubic meters of pure ash left over, enough to fill some 290 trucks or 60 railroad freight cars.

But the graphs of the analyses of the 137 drill cores presented by Kola show that the ash in the graves is normally intermingled with sand, that in more than half of the samples the layer of ash and sand is extremely thin, [\[269\]](#) and that at times the ash is close to being completely absent.[\[270\]](#) Furthermore, out of the 236 samples, 99 are irrelevant, and among the 137 relevant ones more than half show only a very thin layer of sand and ash, whereas among the remainder the percentage of sand is not less than 50%, and the thickness of the sand/ash layer varies greatly. Finally – and Kola does not state this explicitly – besides the sand, the human remains are intermingled also with animal remains:[\[271\]](#)

*“These diggings produced also a large amount of human bones,<sup>[272]</sup> which were partly intermingled with remains of animal origin.”*

From all this it becomes obvious that the amount of ash actually located in the graves is *absolutely incompatible* with the cremation of 600,000 corpses.

#### 4.6. The Soil Removed from the Graves

When a grave is being dug, the soil removed in the process, which was initially somewhat compressed, will normally dilate by 10 to 25% in volume. [273] We have already seen that the burial of 600,000 corpses would have required mass graves having at least a total volume of 75,000 m<sup>3</sup> and an area of 20,800 m<sup>2</sup>. The 75,000 m<sup>3</sup> of extracted sand, undergoing a dilation of 10%, would have increased to some 82,500 m<sup>3</sup>. Where would such an enormous quantity of sand have been put? If it had been spread evenly throughout the camp in a layer 2 m thick, it would have covered an area of  $(82,500 \div 2 =) 41,250 \text{ m}^2$ ; in other words: equal to the total area of the camp minus the mass graves! [274] Dry sand has a specific gravity of 1.4; therefore, the 82,500 m<sup>3</sup> of sand mentioned above would correspond to  $(82,500 \times 1.4 =) 115,500$  tons, or the equivalent of more than 4,600 freight cars or more than 24,000 truckloads. If the mass graves were covered by a layer of sand 30 cm thick, this would have consumed  $(20,800 \times 0.3 =)$  about 6,200 m<sup>3</sup>, but then where would the remaining  $(82,500 - 6,200 =) 76,300 \text{ m}^3$  have gone?

This enormous quantity of sand could neither have been piled up in the camp [275] nor transported out of the camp, therefore it was never actually extracted, and thus the respective mass graves were never dug.

#### 4.7. Actual Surface Area of the Graves

The official thesis of the extermination of 600,000 (or hundreds of thousands) of persons at Bełżec is therefore in contradiction on every count with the material data we have examined. Still, according to Kola's statements, 33 mass graves were dug within the camp. How many corpses did they actually contain? In section 4.2. we have calculated that they would have had a capacity of some 170,500 corpses.

But since this purely theoretical figure is already destroying the Holocaust pretense of a mass extermination allegedly perpetrated at Bełżec, it cannot, at the same time, be accepted as a working hypothesis to determine the full scope of the facts. *Either* an extermination of *at least* 434,500 Jews (the figure resulting from the report of SS-*Sturmbannführer* Höfle of April 28, 1943) did indeed take place at Bełżec, *or* there was no mass extermination at

all, for if we accept a lower number – for example the hypothetical 170,500 victims mentioned above – the result would be that the remaining 264,000 deportees were taken elsewhere – alive and kicking – away from the Bełżec camp.

The capacity figure of 170,500 corpses for the actual mass graves, is, however, based on two unrealistic assumptions: a maximized surface/volume of the graves and a maximized density of corpses in them.

Let us consider the first assumption. Kola's assertions concerning the area and the volume of the mass graves are actually rather arbitrary. He himself, as we have seen in section 4.1. above, has remarked:[\[276\]](#)

*“In the first zone, as we can suppose, connecting smaller neighbouring graves into bigger ones by destroying earth walls separating them was observed.”*

And a few pages further along he adds:

*“Additional disturbances in archeological structures were made by intensive dig-ups directly after the war while local people were searching for jewellery. The facts make it difficult for the archeologists to define precisely the ranges of burial pits.”*

The Germans closed Bełżec in September 1943. The Soviets arrived in October 1944. In October 1945, the district court at Zamość opened an inquiry on the alleged extermination camp. On October 14, the witness Stanislaw Kozak stated:[\[277\]](#)

*“After the removal of the fences, the local population started to search for gold, jewels, and other valuables that might have been left behind by the Jews, by digging in the area of the camp. That explains the great number of human bones spread all over the site of the former camp, as well as the great number of holes in the ground.”*

Other witnesses, like Eustachy Ukraiński[\[278\]](#) and Eugeniusz G.,[\[279\]](#) confirmed this statement. In his report of April 11, 1946, the Zamość prosecutor wrote:[\[280\]](#)

*“At the moment, the camp site has been completely dug up by the local population in their search for valuables. This has brought to the surface ash from the corpses and from wood, charred bones as well as bones that were only partially charred.”*

What's more, as we have seen above, nine graves had been opened by order of Regional Investigative Judge Godzieszewski on October 12, 1945. The local population continued to dig in the area of the camp until the early

sixties, at which time it was transformed into a monument and surrounded by the present enclosure. How many graves were dug up in those twenty years? The diggings took place in total disorder, without any regard for orientation, order, or symmetry, which explains the total lack of orientation, the confusion, and the irregularity of the graves identified by Kola. In the course of these diggings, the walls which had originally separated the graves were destroyed, deceptively enlarging the graves. Furthermore, as we see from Kozak's testimony, the soil removed from the graves was spread across a large area of the camp, leaving ash and human remains exposed. When the graves were refilled, this mixture of soil, ash, and human remains ended up both in places which had originally been earthen walls separating the graves, and in holes where there were originally neither remains nor ash, thus creating the illusion of more numerous and more extensive mass graves. The presence of saponified corpses in limited areas of three large graves (see section 3.1.) can be explained in this way, or by the enlargement of graves that had initially been smaller.

The correctness of this interpretation is supported by the drawings of the graves published by Kola. In fact, the sections of the individual graves nearly always show a highly irregular bottom, with bumps and holes. This is particularly apparent in graves 3, 7, 8, 12, 14, 20, 23, 28, 32, and 33. These unconnected graves give evidence of the activity of wildcat diggers, certainly not of excavations of mass graves aligned in military fashion.[\[281\]](#)

The drawings of the soil samples that were taken provide further confirmation. As we have seen, of the 236 samples taken in connection with the graves, 99 are irrelevant and more than half of the remaining 137 show a very thin layer of sand and ash. What is more important, however, is the fact that there is often a difference between samples in a single grave, with very thin and very thick layers, as shown for example by graves No. 3, 4, 6, 7, 17. [\[282\]](#) Such a variation in the soil strata can only be explained by the inclusion in the grave of soil from an area that did not initially belong to it.

Andrzej Kola, who was supposed to furnish the 'material proof' of the alleged extermination at Bełżec, did not take these facts into account; because of this the layout he gives for the graves is completely random, as is their surface area, their volume, and even their number.

## 4.8. Density of Corpses in the Graves

Let us now turn to the second assumption. Here, the comparison with the

mass graves discovered in the vicinity of the Treblinka I camp leads us to entirely different conclusions. In August 1944 the Soviets found three mass graves with a total surface area of some 150 m<sup>2</sup> and a volume of some 325 m<sup>3</sup>, of which 250 m<sup>3</sup> were actually used (the graves were covered with a layer of sand about 50 cm thick), containing 305 corpses, or 1.2 corpses per cubic meter.[\[283\]](#) A year later, the Poles discovered, in the forest of Maliszewa, about 500 m south of the Treblinka I camp, 41 mass graves having a total surface area of 1,607 m<sup>2</sup>, which, according to the estimate of the judge Łukasziewicz, contained 6,500 corpses. In the opinion of the forensic physician, a grave of 2×1×1 m<sup>3</sup> contained, in fact, 6 corpses, i.e., 3 corpses per cubic meter.[\[284\]](#)

Therefore, the purely theoretical assumption that the original mass graves could have contained 170,500 corpses is without physical basis, and the actual figure should be considerably lower.

In conclusion, the mass graves at Bełżec are absolutely incompatible with the burial of 600,000 bodies, even if we include a large number of children among the dead. Mass extermination excluded, there is thus only one assumption which could explain the presence at Bełżec of mass graves and corpses: the revisionist thesis.

As we will see in the following chapter, at Bełżec deaths of detainees from epidemics (such as typhus) were recorded as early as the spring of 1940, and many other deaths were recorded in succeeding months, when the site became a very harsh hard labor camp. In later phases of the story of Bełżec, the arrival of transports under disastrous conditions – such as the one from Kolomea on September 10, 1942, with 2,000 dead on board – added thousands of bodies to the mass graves of the camp. To this we must add the natural mortality among the approximate 434,000 Jews transferred to Bełżec. Although it is impossible to establish the number of these deaths, it is nonetheless possible to infer, from what has been discussed above, an order of magnitude of several thousands, perhaps even some tens of thousands.

## 4.9. Reasons for Cremation

The cremation of the bodies of the dead constitutes in and of itself neither proof nor evidence in favor of the official theses, because this was the practice in all concentration camps and had a well-established hygienic function. In the area of the Bełżec camp, Kola's findings show that, along a

line linking grave 3 and grave 10, about two-thirds of the length of the camp, [285] the groundwater level was at a depth of 4.80 meters.[286] In the area below, toward the railroad, this level was obviously at a smaller depth; in the area of grave 1, it was 4.10 meters.[287] It is probable that the cremation had to do with the danger of contamination of the ground water, as I have discussed elsewhere.[288] Fundamentally, however, one cannot exclude the explanation adopted by the official historiography, while giving it a different interpretation. If the Soviets had discovered mass graves full of corpses dead of disease or malnutrition, then they would certainly have exploited them for propaganda against the Germans, as the latter did in Katyn and Vinnytsya against the Soviets.

What is not clear is why a certain number of bodies was not cremated. This fact is explained by O'Neil in the following terms:[289]

*“The corpses not exhumed and burnt (graves from first investigation) may have been the result of a mass panic with insufficient time to destroy all evidence.”*

But this makes no sense, because the cremations stopped officially in March 1943, and the SS garrison stayed at the camp for another six months, until September of 1943. One might think that there was an oversight, but this assumption, too, does not hold much water, because the last SS administration of the camp certainly made a record of the mass graves and would have known where to dig. Finally, even the conjecture that at first sight appears to be the most plausible, namely that we have here the corpses of the Jewish personnel exterminated after the end of the cremations, cannot be sustained because everybody – witnesses,[290] judges[291] and historians, including O'Neil[292] – is in agreement on the fact that these Jews were not killed at Bełżec, but were rather transferred to Sobibór.[293]

On the other hand, the graves that contain saponified bodies are not concentrated in a definite area, but are scattered throughout the camp (see document 4 in the Appendix). The most plausible hypothesis is that these graves pertain to the previous camp administration and therefore go back to 1940, when Bełżec was originally used as a camp for gypsies and later integrated into the “Otto-Programm;”[294] in both instances plenty of victims were buried in the camp. At that time, the structure of the camp was different from what it was later on, and there was more space; this may explain the unusual position of these mass graves.



## 5. The Buildings

### 5.1. The Actual Purpose of the Excavations

The Polish researchers also sought to identify the buildings that had been at Bełżec. The results have been described in detail by A. Kola.

What strikes us immediately in Kola's account is that, opposed to the procedure with the mass graves, actual diggings were undertaken to bring to light the original structures. Kola has published a dozen photographs of these. This was done out of an obvious scientific intent: The primary and essential task of the Polish archeologists was the search for traces of the missing gas chambers. For this reason they unearthed and examined any kind of structural remnant in the hope that it might belong to the gas chambers, but they were careful not to disinter and examine the remains in the mass graves, because, as we have seen, this would have risked too blatant a refutation of the thesis of mass extermination. The need to find the remnants of the gas chambers has spurred Kola into advancing the most unconvincing hypotheses.

### 5.2. The Alleged Gas Chambers of the Second Phase of the Camp

After having described six irrelevant findings (Buildings A – F) Andrzej Kola focuses on “*Building G*” (see document 4, site reference G). Here, the drillings[\[295\]](#)

*“revealed the existence of an undefined building negative, made completely of wood, partly buried in the ground, dismantled totally. In the bottom view the relicts had a shape of a regular rectangle with the size of about 3,5 x 15 m, which bottom was deposited horizontally to the depth of about 80 cm. [...] The wooden building served probably as gas chamber in the second stage of the camp functioning [sic], in autumn and winter 1942. Such an interpretation could be confirmed by its location in the camp plan. The probing drills from the north-eastern and eastern part of the building excavated only mass grave pits. Location of the gas chamber close to the burial places in the second stage of the camp existence was confirmed by some of the witness reports.”*

This is incredible. The only reason why this “*Building G*” must have contained the alleged homicidal gas chambers of the second phase of the

camp is its location! Obviously Kola never even considered whether this wooden structure could have belonged to the initial phase of the camp, *i.e.*, the year 1940, and whether the graves could have been dug after the structure had been dismantled. Actually, everything stated above about this building is in open contradiction to the testimonies and the judicial findings. Andrzej Kola is aware of this, as he writes:[\[296\]](#)

*“According to him [Rudolf Reder], however, the chamber was made of concrete. The excavations carried out in that area did not prove any traces of brick or concrete buildings, which makes that report unreliable.”*

But then one would have to class all the witnesses and all the judicial findings as “*unreliable*,” because they all agree that the gas chambers of the second phase of the camp were housed in a brick structure. One has only to quote the two most authoritative historical sources. The sentence passed at the Bełżec trial (January 18 to 21, 1965) mentions explicitly the construction, in the second phase of the camp, of “*a solid stone building with a total of 6 gas chambers measuring 4 by 5 meters.*”[\[297\]](#)

And the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, under the entry “*Belzec*,” chapter “*Second Phase*” states:[\[298\]](#)

*“The existing gas chambers were demolished and in their place a new building, made of brick and concrete and containing six 13-by-16-foot (4 × 5 m) cells, was erected.”*

Kola’s hypothesis contradicts the testimonies and the judicial findings not only as to the structure of the alleged gas chambers, but also regarding their surface area. As noted in the two preceding quotations, their official dimensions are 4 by 5 m, *i.e.* 20 square meters each, or 120 m<sup>2</sup> for all six chambers. Kola’s “*Building G*,” on the other hand, had dimensions of 3.5 by 15 m or 52.5 m<sup>2</sup>. According to the drawing that is at the center of J. Bau’s map, the gas chamber would have had to contain six gas chambers arranged on either side of a central corridor.[\[299\]](#) If that corridor had a minimum width of 1 m[\[300\]](#) and ran the length of the building, an area of 37.5 m<sup>2</sup> would remain for the six gas chambers, *i.e.*, 6.25 m<sup>2</sup> in average (*i.e.*, including outer and inner walls) for each gas chamber, which thus would have had to measure ((3.5–1)÷2=) 1.25 by 5 meters!

To recapitulate: On the one hand, the archeological findings contradict the testimonies and the judicial findings, making them inadmissible; on the other hand, Kola’s hypotheses regarding the functions of “*Building G*” are in

disagreement with the testimonies and the judicial findings. However, if we are to accept the official thesis, we cannot free ourselves from these sources: Either the gas chambers did exist the way the witnesses have described them, or they did not exist at all. And because the archeological findings contradict the witnesses, the gas chambers of the second phase of the camp never existed. And those of the first phase?

### 5.3. The Alleged Gas Chambers of the First Phase of the Camp

This assumed extermination structure, according to Kozak, who claimed to have taken part in its construction and described it in detail,[\[301\]](#) must have been located in the southern part of the camp, near the railroad siding. Andrzej Kola has therefore examined this area of the camp in detail, looking for the remains of these elusive first gas chambers. In the southwest angle of the camp he found the remnants of a large building (labeled by him “*Building D*” and indicated by me with the letter “*D*” in document 4 in the Appendix) with brick foundations and measuring 26 by 12 meters. He describes it as follows:[\[302\]](#)

*“The building had at least 6 equal rooms with the sizes of about 16.60 x 3.80 m, separated by inside wall. Only the southern (6th) room was additionally divided into two smaller ones.”*

This is at variance with the drawing of the diggings he presented (figure 69 on p. 55),[\[303\]](#) which shows foundations of about 16 by 12 m and dividing walls in six main rooms (which I have numbered 1 to 6 in the drawing mentioned) with dimensions of about 5 × 3.80 meters. In sector No. 2, there is a brick channel 6 × 1 m<sup>2</sup> (labeled “*K*” in the drawing of the diggings) “*serving originally as a canal[sic] for repairing cars.*”[\[304\]](#) The two photographs published by Kola leave no room for doubt in this respect.[\[305\]](#) The conclusion is obvious:[\[306\]](#)

*“One can suppose the room served as a garage.”*

I have dwelt on this point because, surprisingly, Kola clumsily tries to pass it off as the first extermination structure, with its three gas chambers!

Of this, Kola gives not even a vague hint on the four pages he dedicates to “*Building D.*” The contrast between a real garage with a workshop for vehicle repairs and the alleged homicidal gas chambers is too glaring. He therefore introduces his nonsensical hypothesis underhandedly, in a different context.

A few pages further on he says that he did three soundings in the area north of “Building D”[\[307\]](#)

*“to verify the location of the railway which served in the first stage of the camp functioning for removing the corpses from the gas chambers to the grave pits. It was connected with the interpretation of the function of Building D as gas chamber.”*

But what sort of a link could there be between “Building D” and the alleged gas chambers? Again, only its location!

The camp railway that Kola was looking for was mentioned by Kozak, who declared:[\[308\]](#)

*“Along the north side of this barrack [the ‘gas chambers’] there was a ramp made of wooden planks at a level of 1 m, and along this ramp there was a track of a narrow-gauge railroad leading to the ditch, which the ‘blacks’ [Soviet prisoners of war] had dug in the very north and east border of the extermination camp.”*

And here is the result of Kola’s search:[\[309\]](#)

*“However, traces of that railway were not found.”*

Later, possibly a little discouraged by this resounding failure, Kola returns to his hypothesis in a slightly more moderated tone:[\[310\]](#)

*“Only the building D was relatively big. Can it be interpreted as a death chamber?”*

Then Kola restates the description of the supposed first gassing structure given by the witness Kozak and comments:<sup>309</sup>

*“They [the remains of “Building D”] are different, much bigger building size, which were about 26.00 x 8.00 m,<sup>[311]</sup> and the interior was divided into 6 rooms. [...] The function interpretation of building D and the witness’s description is not fully in accordance with the observation made during archeological works. It concerns first of all its location inside the camp. That building was excavated in its western part, whereas, according to S. Kozak’s report the gas chamber described by him could have been placed several meters toward the south from that place. Moreover the witness mentioned erecting the hut with the destination of being a gas chamber, when in the case of building D could have only an adaptation of the existing building equipped with a garage canal. The division of foundation part of building D into 6 identical rooms indicate that its overground part had 6 frame-houses, one of which served as garage.”*

To summarize: The barrack described by Kozak was at a different location than the traces of “*Building D*.” It was built expressly as a gassing structure, whereas “*Building D*” had a different purpose. It measured 12 by 8 m as opposed to the latter’s 26 by 12 m. It was divided into three rooms rather than the six in “*Building D*,” and finally there is no trace of a camp railway: Thus, Kozak’s description is in absolute disagreement with the archeological findings. But Kola did not want to draw the logical conclusion that this witness, too, is ‘unreliable’; instead, he has opted for an unbelievable escape hatch:[\[312\]](#)

*“In such an interpretation the gas chamber in the first stage of the camp existence must have been situated south-east from building D and south to it the changing room and the barber.”* (emphasis added)

In other words, since the remains of “*Building D*” are in total disagreement with Kozak’s description, and since the homicidal gas chambers must have existed, it follows that they were located “*south-east of building D*”! Unfortunately for Kola, there is not a trace of any structure in that area. Thus, in his attempt at least partly to salvage the official thesis, Kola is obliged to have recourse to an act of faith: There are no archeological traces of those elusive gas chambers, but nevertheless they did exist!

That there is indeed not a trace of the presumed gas chambers is admitted candidly by O’Neil who writes:[\[313\]](#)

*“We found no trace of the gassing barracks dating from either the first or second phase of the camp’s construction.”*

Obviously, he relates that fact to the efforts of the SS to erase any vestiges of the alleged gassing structures, but who can seriously believe that they could have succeeded in making the buildings, foundations and all, disappear without a trace? Unless the SS had sensed that over half a century later Kola and Robin O’Neil would come looking for them with their manual drill!

# Chapter V:

## Documented History of the Bełżec Camp

### 1. Origins and Function of the Bełżec Camp

In June of 1940, as part of the so-called “*Otto-Programm*,”[\[314\]](#) the Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht decided on the construction of an anti-tank trench (a “*Buggraben*”) between the Bug and San rivers along the Polish-Soviet border.

In September of 1940, 6,000 Jews were transported from Warsaw and elsewhere to Hrubieszów, a town near the river Bug, which formed the border between Poland and the Soviet Union, where they were to build a road of strategic importance. The detainees were housed in a labor camp. On September 10, a Jewish hospital was set up for the inmates. One of those assigned to it was a Jewish doctor who left Poland in April 1943 and later wrote an account of the German occupation. He stated:[\[315\]](#)

*“At the same time [August 1940], the Jews of the city and the district of Lublin were arrested and sent to Belzec, where they were ‘taught’ how to work under the guidance of the ‘famous’ Dachau henchman Major Dollf and his assistant Berteczko. Almost nobody came back from this ‘course.’ Many died of injuries from the beatings they received while working, others from typhus and other diseases, still others were simply shot. At Belzec, their main task was to dig anti-tank trenches along the border at a distance of several tens of kilometers.”*

Bełżec was the center of a network of ten forced labor camps for a total of some 15,000 Jews, of whom 2,500 were initially detained at Bełżec[\[316\]](#) as part of an “*SS Grenzsicherungsbaukommando*” (SS border securing construction group).[\[317\]](#) The living conditions of the detainees in these camps were very harsh. In a “*Bericht über das Ergebnis einer ärztlichen Visitation in den Lagern der Belzec-Gruppe*” (Report concerning the results of a medical inspection of the camps in the Bełżec group), dating from the middle of September 1940, one can read:[\[318\]](#)

*“Generally abominable, especially in the north. The rooms are absolutely inadequate to take in so many people. They are dark and dirty. Infestation by lice is rampant. About 30% of the workers have no shoes,*



*no trousers, no shirt. Everyone sleeps on the floor, without any straw. The roofs are damaged everywhere, no glass in the windows, it is terribly crowded. For example, 75 persons sleep in a room 5 by 6 [m], on the floor, one upon the other. Under these circumstances, there is no question of undressing. On top of that, there is a scarcity of soap, and it is even difficult to get water. The sick sleep and lie together with the healthy. The barracks must not be left during the night, all the natural urges have to be relieved locally. Thus, it is not surprising that under these circumstances there are many cases of disease. It is extremely difficult to be excused from work for even one day. Hence, even the sick have to go to work.”*

This tragic situation seems to have been especially prevalent at Belzec because, on September 20, 1940, a “*Bekanntmachung an die jüdische Bevölkerung*” (announcement to the Jewish population) from the *Arbeitsamt Lublin* (Lublin labor office) threatened Jews who tried to avoid in the following terms:[\[319\]](#)

*“Anyone not respecting this duty after Monday, September 23, 1940, will immediately be sent to the Belzec work camp.”*

On October 21, 1940, a civil servant of the office of “*Innere Verwaltung, Bevölkerungswesen und Fürsorge*” (Internal administration, population matters and social welfare) of the “*Regierung des Generalgouvernements*” (Administration of the Government General) wrote an internal memo concerning “*Ihre fernmündliche Anfrage wegen Auflösung des Judenlagers in Belzec und vorhandene Mißstände*” (your telephone inquiry regarding the dissolution of the Jewish camp at Belzec and present deficiencies). The memo states that because of lack of cooperation on the part of SS *Brigadeführer* (major general) Globocnik, it was not clear whether “*das Judenlager in Belzec*” (the Jewish camp at Belzec) had already been closed. The memo continues:[\[320\]](#)

*“The Jews of the Belzec camp shall be disbanded [[321](#)] and put to work within the Otto-Programm. Those from Radom and Warsaw are to go back to their original homes. The Jewish councils are even ready to fetch their racial comrades. Concerning the execution of this task there is a puzzling lack of clarity, and the proper cooperation of the organs of the SS and *Polizeiführer* [Chief of SS and Police] cannot always be achieved in practice. The present state of affairs is as follows: 8 trains have been scheduled for the transport. Two trains have meanwhile departed. The first train left from Hrubieschow with 920 Jews on board, accompanied by*

*9 SS and local militia personnel. Only about 500 of them have arrived. We could not find out where the other 400 have gone. As they cannot have been shot in such a large number, I have heard it said that they were perhaps released against payment of a certain sum. Let me stress that this latter statement is only a supposition. The second train went to Radom with some 900 Jews. While it would have been easy to identify the 3 to 400 Jews from Radom still at the Belzec camp, this request of the Department of Work was not granted, and only 16 from Radom were on the train.”*

The fate of the Jews detained at Belzec was clarified in the “*Oktober-Bericht des Gouverneurs im Distrikt Lublin, Zörner, über die Zwangsarbeit der Juden*” (October report of the governor of the Lublin district, Zörner, regarding the forced labor of the Jews):[\[322\]](#)

*“During the month in question, so many Jews were requisitioned for forced labor that Jews had to be brought in from other districts. From the Jewish camp at Belzec, 4,331 Jewish forced laborers who were released had been assigned to road construction and building work for the ‘Otto-Programm.’ Their condition was such that they could not be regarded as completely fit for work.”*

Previously, in April 1940, Belzec had served as a camp for gypsies, and the inmates had suffered from the spread of infectious diseases such as typhus.[\[323\]](#)

## 2. The Belzec Camp in Documents

Only a few original documents concerning the deportations to Belzec (from Galicia) have survived. While they show a very severe German attitude toward the Jews, they do not confirm the alleged extermination policy.

On February 2, 1942, the *Kommandeur der Ordnungspolizei im Distrikt Galizien* (Commander of order police in the district of Galicia) issued an order on the “*Arbeitseinsatz von Juden*” (labor service of Jews), in which he stated:[\[324\]](#)

*“On the basis of a number of notes I have received from German official agencies and authorities, I must strongly insist on the following: Recently, we have seen more and more cases in which Jewish workers assigned to urgent work for war aims are being rounded up by various official agencies and are thus being withdrawn from the necessary work that they had been assigned to. Jews who have been drafted for important war projects of the Wehrmacht as well as for projects of the Four Year Plan possess a corresponding identity card bearing the seal of the agencies or authorities to which they are assigned.*

*I request once again to inform expressly all units under [my] command, and in particular the Ukrainian auxiliary police, to the effect that it is prohibited to round up those Jews assigned to work service. In case of non-compliance with this order I shall punish the guilty.”*

On September 14, 1942, *Zugwachtmann der Schutzpolizei* (railroad guard of the protection police) Josef Jäcklein wrote a report, “*Resettlement from Kolomea to Belzec*.” He escorted a train of 51 cars loaded with 8,200 Jews that left Kolomea at 20:50 hours on September 10. The Jews quickly sought ways to escape, ripping the barbed wire from the openings of the cars and opening up holes in the walls, which caused Jäcklein to cable ahead to Stanislau station to have boards and nails ready. On arrival at that station, the train stopped one hour and a half for the repairs. A few stations farther along, the Jews had again ripped out the barbed wire and made new holes, so the train stopped again. Jäcklein relates:

*“When the train left, I even noticed that in one car hammers and pliers were being used. Questioning the Jews as to why they still had these tools, they declared that they had been told that they would be able to put them to good use at their next destination.”*

Again and again, at every stop, the train had to stop for repairs to the car walls. Finally the train arrived at Lemberg/Lwów, where Jäcklein turned over “9 cars marked L and destined for the forced labor camp at Lemberg” to SS *Obersturmführer* (senior lieutenant) Schulte, but another 1,000 Jews came on board. When the train moved on, escape attempts resumed. As the escort had expended all their ammunition, they had to use “stones” and “bayonets” to prevent escapes. The transport took place under catastrophic conditions. Jäcklein writes in this respect:

*“The ever increasing panic among the Jews, caused by the strong heat, overloading of the cars with up to 220 Jews, the smell of corpses – 2,000 dead were counted when the train was unloaded – made the transport nearly impossible.”*

The train arrived at Bełżec at 6:45 p.m. the following day and was turned over to the camp authorities at 7:30 p.m. Unloading the cars took until 10 p.m.[\[325\]](#)

This transport was also the topic of another report, drawn up at Lemberg on September 14, 1942, by *Leutnant der Schutzpolizei der Reserve* (lieutenant of the reserve protection police) Wassermann.[\[326\]](#) The train carried 8,205 Jews, and most cars contained 180 to 200 persons. The guard detail traveled in 2 passenger cars so that the average load per car was  $(8,205 \div 49 =) 167$  persons.

In the first portion of his report, Wassermann describes a transport from Kolomea to Bełżec on September 7, 1942. The security police gathered some 5,300 Jews at the “*Sammelplatz des Arbeitsamtes*” (collection site of the labor office), and another 300 were rounded up in the Jewish sector. Wassermann states:

*“The transport was fully loaded at 19 hours. Altogether, 4,769 Jews have been resettled, once the security police had released about 1,000 of the Jews who had been rounded up.”*

Each car was loaded with 100 persons. Other Jews were, however, shot:

*“On September 7, 300 old, infected, frail, or untransportable Jews were executed.”*

During the days following there were more shootings:

*“During the actions in the Kolomea area on September 8, 9, and 10, 1942, about 400 Jews had to be liquidated by shooting for the usual reasons.”*

The catastrophic transport of September 10-11, 1942, was caused by

logistical deficiencies rather than homicidal intent; when it was possible, transports took place under more humane conditions, like the one on September 7, when the deportees traveled 100 per car. Before the transport left, the security police released about 1,000 Jews who could have easily been transported on the train, by simply increasing the load from 100 to 123 persons. During the transport of September 10-11, 1942, nine cars with detainees were unloaded “*for the forced labor camp.*” This does not jibe with an alleged program for the *total* extermination of the Jews.

The shootings of various groups of Jews were motivated by the fact that they were “*old, infected, frail, or untransportable*” persons – but if the direct transports to Bełżec were carried out for the purpose of extermination, then why these preliminary shootings?

Moreover, that the “*resettlement*” was in reality the murder of the Jews in the alleged gas chambers, as the official historiography interprets it, is all the more dubious in light of the above.

In the weekly report of “*Sicherungsbezirk Nord, Einsatzkommando 5. Komp. Pol. Rgt. 24*” (Security district north, action commando, 5th company, 24th police regiment), written at Rawa Ruska on December 12, 1942, one can read:[\[327\]](#)

“*In the period concerned, the action commando was used for the resettlement of Jews in Rawa Ruska. 750 Jews who were in hiding after resettlement were dealt with according to instructions.*”

Apparently these Jews were not hiding before or during the resettlement in order to escape it, but they were hiding *afterwards*. Hence, these Jews were still alive “*after resettlement*” and were able to hide – certainly not in the Bełżec camp! – and they were treated accordingly because of that, which can mean that they were either shot or punished otherwise.

On October 31, 1942, the *Einsatzkommando* of *Sicherungsbezirk Nord* reports the arrest (but not shooting!) of 20 Jews for having “*left resettlement location without permission and jumped from transport trains.*”[\[328\]](#)

And the report of December 5 states that 60 Jews “*were dealt with according to instructions*” (perhaps shot, but perhaps also only arrested) for the very same reason:[\[329\]](#)

“*Escaped from transport trains and left resettlement location without permission.*”

The “*resettlement location*” was the ghetto of Rawa Ruska, 27 km away from Bełżec; it continued to exist seven months after the opening of the

presumed extermination camp!

As I have shown elsewhere, on October 28, 1942, SS *Obergruppenführer* (General) Friedrich Wilhelm Krüger, in his capacity as Senior SS and Police Chief in the General Government and Secretary of State for the Security Services, issued a “*Police regulation concerning the formation of Jewish living quarters in the districts of Warsaw and Lublin*,” which instituted 12 Jewish residential areas; on November 10, 1942, Krüger instituted another 4 such areas in the district of Radom, 5 in the district of Krakow, 32 in the district of Galicia, and 2 more in the county of Rawa Ruska (Rawa Ruska ghetto and Lubaczów).[\[330\]](#) A few weeks later, Bełżec, which – according to the official historiography – had been set up specifically to exterminate the Jewish population of the district of Galicia, ceased activity!



### 3. Belzec As Part of the German Policy of Deporting Jews to the East

A document that has recently come to light – a report by SS *Sturmbannführer* (major) Höfle to SS *Obersturmbannführer* (lieutenant colonel) Heim, dated April 28, 1943, and decrypted by the British secret services – gives the number of persons transferred to Belzec up to December 31, 1942: 434,508, numbers quite far from those championed by the official historiography.[\[331\]](#)

This document must be viewed in the light of decisions taken by Fritz Reuter, an employee of the Department of Population and Welfare in the Office of the Governor General for the District of Lublin, and by SS *Hauptsturmführer* Hans (or Hermann)[\[332\]](#) Höfle, then delegate for Jewish resettlement in the Lublin district, dated March 16, 1942.

It is advisable here to repeat what I have already written in a separate study:[\[333\]](#)

On March 17, 1942, Fritz Reuter made a note in which he referred to a talk on the previous day with the SS *Hauptsturmführer* Höfle, the delegate for the resettlement of Jews in the Lublin district:[\[334\]](#)

*“I arranged for a talk with Hstuf. Höfle for Monday, the 16th of March 1942, namely at 17:30 hours. In the course of the discussion the following was explained by Hstuf. Höfle:*

*It would be expedient to divide the transports of Jews arriving in the Lublin district at the station of origin into employable and unemployable Jews. If it is not possible to make this distinction at the departure station, then the transport will have to be divided in Lublin in the manner mentioned above.*

*All unemployable Jews are to come to Bezec [Belzec], the outermost border station in the Zamosz district.*

*Hstuf. Höfle is thinking of building a large camp in which the employable Jews can be registered in a file system according to their occupations and requisitioned from there.*

*Piaski is being made Jew-free and will be the collection point for the Jews coming out of the Reich.*

*Trawnicki [Trawniki] is not at present occupied by Jews.*

*H. asks where on the Dęblin-Trawnicki route 60,000 Jews can be*

*unloaded. Informed of the Jewish transports now departing from here, H. explained that of the 500 Jews arriving in Susiec, those who were unemployable could be sorted out and sent to Bezec. According to a government teletype dated March 4, 1942, a Jewish transport, whose destination was the Trawnicki station, is rolling out of the Protectorate. These Jews are not unloaded in Trawnicki, but have been brought to Izbiza. An inquiry of the Zamosz district, asking to be able to request 200 Jews from there for work, was answered in the affirmative by H.*

*In conclusion he stated that he could accept 4-5 transports of 1,000 Jews to the terminal station Bezec daily. These Jews would cross the border and never return to the General Gouvernement."*

This document is of capital significance for two reasons. First, Höfle was the deputy *Stabsführer* (staff leader) of the SS and Police Chief for the Lublin district (Odilo Globocnik). According to official historiography, in this capacity he coordinated *"the construction of the extermination camp Belzec and the deportations there from the Lublin district."*<sup>[335]</sup> Second, Bełżec is supposed to have begun its homicidal activity on the day after the talk referred to in Reuter's note, March 17, 1942. According to official historiography, it was (like Treblinka, Sobibór, and Chełmno) a pure extermination camp, where there was no separation of those fit and those unfit for labor. Yet, according to the cited document:

A subdivision of the Jews into those able to work and those not able to work was planned. The Jews able to work were to be used for labor assignments. Bełżec was to become a camp in which the Jews fit to work were *"registered in a file system according to their occupations."* This does not conform in the least to a 'pure extermination camp.'

All Jews unable to work were to be brought to Bełżec. The camp was supposed to *"accept 4-5 transports daily, of 1,000 Jews to the terminal station Bezec[sic],"* clearly Jews unable to work, who would *"cross the border"* never to return to the General Government. For that reason, Bełżec was designated as *"the outermost border station in the Zamosz district."* This sentence makes sense only in connection with a resettlement beyond the border.

Piaski was to become the *"collection point for the Jews coming out of the Reich."* If one travels by road, it is another 24 km to Lublin, located to the northwest of Piaski, and 91 km to Bełżec. The distance to Bełżec by train is even greater (about 130 km). This contradicts the thesis that Bełżec was a

pure extermination camp, since in this case the collection point would have been Bełżec itself.

It was intended to unload 60,000 Jews at a point on the Dęblin-Trawniki route. The former locale is 76 km northwest of Lublin (in the direction of Warsaw); Trawniki is 13 km east of Piaski (for which it serves as rail station) on the Lublin-Rejowiec-Chełm/Lublin-Bełżec railroad line (before the Rejowiec station, a junction of the rail line turns off south toward Bełżec). This project as well cannot be reconciled with the claim that Bełżec was a pure extermination camp.

This is fully and entirely confirmed by a report dated April 7, 1942. Its author is SS *Hauptsturmführer* Richard Türk, director of the Department for Population and Welfare in the Office of the Governor of the Lublin district. The report deals with the month of March and contains a paragraph titled “*Jewish Resettlement Operation of the SS and Police Chief*,” in which Türk reports:

*“The possibilities of accommodation, limited to places along the Dęblin-Rejowiec-Belzec railway line, were and are currently being discussed with the representative of the SS and Police Chief. Alternative possibilities were determined.*

*On the basis of my proposal, there is a fundamental understanding that as Jews from the west are being settled here, local Jews are to be evacuated in like numbers, if possible. The current status of the settlement process is that approximately 6,000 were settled here from the Reich, approximately 7,500 have been evacuated from the district, and 18,000 from the city of Lublin.*

*Individually, 3,400 have been evacuated from Piaski, district of Lublin, and 2,000 Reich Jews have come in so far; 2,000 from Izbica, Krasnystaw district, and 4,000 Reich Jews arriving in it; from Opole and Wawolbnica, Puławy district, 1,950 have been evacuated [...].”*

The report later mentions the resettlements of Jews from Mielec and Bilgoraj and makes clear that the majority of the evacuees was unfit for labor: [\[336\]](#)

*“On March 13, 1942, the Cholm district received approximately 1,000 Jews, of whom 200 were accommodated in Sosnowice and 800 in Włodawa.*

*On March 14, 1942, Międzyrzec, Radzyn district, received 750 Jews. On March 16, 1942, the Hrubieszow district received 1,343 Jews, 843 of*

*which have been accommodated in Dubienka and 500 in Belz. The majority were women and children, with men fit for labor only a minority. On March 16, 1942, the Zamosz district received 500 Jews, all of whom have been lodged in Cieszanow.*

*On March 22, 1942, 57 Jewish families with 221 persons were resettled from Bilgoraj to Tarnograd.”*

The history of the resettlement of Jews in the district of Lublin confirms fully the Höfle directive mentioned above and is in clear contrast with the official thesis of the extermination of Jews.

After the opening of the Bełżec and Sobibór camps, as many as 33 transports of western Jews (a total of 31,046 persons) arrived in the Lublin district; they were not sent to either of the two alleged extermination camps; and after the arrival of the first transport at Sobibór (May 9, 1942) in the district of Lublin, through July 15, 1942, there were another 36 transports (with a total of 35,034 persons) of which only eleven (with 11,021 persons) were sent to Sobibór, and none to Bełżec.[\[337\]](#)

On the other hand, the first transport of western Jews to arrive at Sobibór (the transport of 1,000 Jews arriving on May 9, 1942, from Theresienstadt at Sobibór-Osowa[\[338\]](#)) was not gassed in its entirety, as the official historiography maintains: At least 101 Jews from this transport died at Majdanek,[\[339\]](#) and we have registry data for 90 of them;[\[340\]](#) this indicates that an equal number of Jews – if not the entire transport – were transferred to this camp.

Nor were the Jews deported to various places in the Lublin district ‘gassed’ in the alleged extermination camps at Bełżec and Sobibór. According to research done by Miroslav Kryl, 858 Jews sent to the Lublin district from the ghettos at Theresienstadt and Prague died between May and September 1942 at the Majdanek camp.[\[341\]](#) Of these, 525 arrived directly at Lublin and 333 had come there from other places in the Lublin district.[\[342\]](#)

A study by Janina Kielboń of the *Totenbücher* (death books) of Majdanek furnishes more detailed data: Between May and September 1942 a total of 4,687 western Jews died in this camp, among them 1,066 Czech Jews, 2,849 Slovak Jews, and 772 German and Austrian Jews.[\[343\]](#) Of these, 735 Jews were between 11 and 20 years old, 163 were over 60 years of age, out of whom three Slovak Jews were in the 81 to 90 year age range.[\[344\]](#)

The number of western Jews who died at Majdanek, however, was even greater, as can be deduced from the series of documents “*Totenmeldung für*

*die Effektenkammer*” (Mortality report for the property depot), which have survived in part. For eight days in all (October 20 and November 29 through December 5, 1942), the deaths of at least 183 western Jews were registered in these documents: 41 Czechs, 108 Slovaks, and 34 Germans and Austrians. [345] The Jews evacuated from Theresienstadt had been deported mainly to Izbica (March 11 and 17), to Trawniki (June 12), and to Zamość (June 20 and 30).

Thus the number of deaths of western Jews at Majdanek established so far is 4,870. According to Zofia Leszczyńska, between April and June 1942 five transports of Czech and Slovak Jews (4,813 persons) were sent directly to Majdanek and another 16 (about 13,500 persons) were transferred there from the residential areas of the Lublin district, [346] which brings the total to about 18,300. This figure, though, does not include the German and Austrian Jews, whose numbers can be estimated at about 3,600. [347] Hence, no fewer than 21,900 western Jews were registered at Majdanek, about one third of all the deportees to the Lublin district. Jews from France, Belgium, and Holland [348] also arrived at Majdanek and were probably taken elsewhere. Only one Dutch Jew appears in “*Totenmeldung für die Effektenkammer*”: Lewy Trompetter, born in Amsterdam on April 27, 1873, and registered, at age 69, under the number 7,593; he died on December 1, 1942. [349]

In October of 1942, 1,700 Jews left Bełżec for Majdanek.<sup>347</sup> At least 700 Dutch Jews were moved from Sobibór to work camps, [350] and some of them returned home by way of Auschwitz.<sup>349</sup> The Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (Imperial Institute for War Documentation) in Amsterdam has in its archives six postcards written by Dutch Jews detained at the work camp of Włodawa [351] (Sobibór). [352] One was written on May 23, 1943, [353] by Elly Herschel, a Dutch Jewess, 18 years old, who had been deported to Sobibór on April 6. [354] From Treblinka, at least several thousand Jews were transferred to other camps. [355] The case of Minna Grossova, a Czech Jewess, is particularly significant; born on September 20, 1874, she was deported to Treblinka October 19, 1942, but died on December 30, 1943, at Auschwitz. [356] Thus, in spite of her 68 years of age, she was not only not ‘gassed’ at Treblinka, but was indeed moved to Auschwitz, where she was duly registered; hence, she survived even the ‘selection’ on arrival.

Besides the transports to the Lublin district, between May 5 and November 28, 1942, another 36 transports of western Jews (about 35,000

additional persons) were deported into the eastern territories (Minsk, Raasiku, Maly Trostinec, Riga) without even stopping at the three alleged extermination camps at Bełżec, Sobibór, and Treblinka.[\[357\]](#)

How are these facts to be reconciled with the theses of official historiography?

In the preceding chapters I have shown that not only is the massacre of the Jews transported to Bełżec not confirmed by any material or documentary proof, but also that the results of Polish archeological research refute it; therefore, we are left with only one possibility: Bełżec was a transit camp – of the same type as Sobibór and Treblinka.

This is not the place to reiterate the evidence I have gathered in another, much more exhaustive study.[\[358\]](#) Thus I shall limit myself to stating that, having excluded the hypothesis of a massacre, we can regard as true everything that the witnesses described as ‘camouflage’ to fool the victims. I refer in particular to the speeches by the SS regarding the destination of the deportees: They were in a transit camp, from which they would be moved to other labor camps in the east, but first they had to take a shower and be disinfested.

And, as Jean-Claude Pressac has made clear, the first alleged gassing building can be interpreted only as a building for disinfestation by means of steam.<sup>110</sup>

Significantly, no witness has ever mentioned the existence at Bełżec, or anywhere near the camp, of a disinfestation unit, which, however, would have been indispensable – *even* if mass exterminations had taken place – for the treatment of the enormous quantity of the victims’ garments, before those could have been loaded on trains and shipped to Lublin.



# Conclusion

In this study, I have described, first of all, the literary formation of the thesis, presently upheld by official historiography, of mass exterminations at Bełżec by means of diesel engine exhaust gas; I have shown that it represents the culmination of the propaganda legends spread during the Second World War by professionals in atrocity propaganda like Jan Karski. I have exhaustively demonstrated how this version came to prevail over the other two versions – just as untrue – of extermination by means of electrocution and by means of “*trains of death*.” I have further shown that the two principal testimonies on which the extermination thesis has been tendentiously constructed – those of Rudolf Reder and of Kurt Gerstein – are not only in irreconcilable disagreement with each other over the type of engine used for the alleged murder of the victims (diesel for one, gasoline for the other), but even with respect to its very use as an instrument of murder: Whereas Gerstein attributed the death of the victims in the alleged gas chambers to the exhaust gases from his diesel engine, Reder asserted that the exhaust gases of his gasoline engine were released into the open air instead of into the gas chambers! The official thesis, based on the so-called ‘Gerstein report,’ has therefore been openly denied ever since the immediate postwar period.

Once the murder method had been selected – exhaust gases from a diesel engine – the judiciary quickly entered the fray on the side of historiography, to give it its official blessing and to disseminate it worldwide through the farcical trial testimonies as a worthy epilogue to the black propaganda of the war years.

The thesis of mass extermination at Bełżec not only collapses under the weight of its own principal main witnesses, it also runs up against insurmountable material impossibilities, especially those concerning the cremation of the alleged victims. Polish archeological research has dealt the final deathblow to the official thesis: Its findings categorically disprove the possibility of burying 600,000 (or several hundred thousand), corpses, and the quantity of bodies, bones, and ashes that was discovered are absolutely incompatible with such an enormous massacre. Moreover, the total absence of archeological evidence of the alleged extermination installations completely refutes the conflicting testimonies that are the basis for the extermination claims, testimonies Tregenza has already qualified “*as not*

*reliable*” (rendering them thus doubly unreliable). The excavations at Belzec have therefore contributed greatly to revealing the truth – but not the official truth!

Now that the hypothesis of mass extermination has been ruled out, there remains only one alternative: Belzec was a transit camp for the transfer of Jews to the east.

# Appendix

## Abbreviations

|              |                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>AGK:</b>  | Archiwum Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni w Polsce, at present Główna Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Warsaw |
| <b>GARF:</b> | Gosudarstvenni Archiv Rossiskoi Federatsii, Moscow                                                                                 |
| <b>HILA:</b> | Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University                                                                       |
| <b>IMT:</b>  | The Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal, Nuremberg, 1945-1946                              |
| <b>ROD:</b>  | Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, Amsterdam                                                                                 |
| <b>ZStL:</b> | Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen, Ludwigsburg                                                                          |

# Tables

## Table 1

Jews deported on May 9, 1942, from Theresienstadt/Terezin to Sobibór-Osowa and deceased at Lublin-Majdanek (from: *Terezínská Pamětní Kniha*, Terezínská Iniciativa, Melantrich 1995, vol. I, pages shown in table; dates given in dd/mm/yyyy).

| Surname   | first name(s) | date of birth | date of death | reference |
|-----------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|
| Adler     | Rudolf        | 6/12/1909     | 21/7/1942     | p. 522    |
| Beck      | Rudolf Jan    | 27/4/1918     | 14/8/1942     | p. 354    |
| Broch     | Karel         | 19/3/1895     | 4/7/1942      | p. 508    |
| Danzer    | Jaroslav      | 26/4/1910     | 6/9/1942      | p. 522    |
| Derblich  | Josef         | 11/9/1894     | 14/8/1942     | p. 522    |
| Ditmar    | Julius        | 28/5/1894     | 17/8/1942     | p. 523    |
| Dorfmann  | Ladislav      | 26/8/1891     | 4/9/1942      | p. 523    |
| Dubsky    | Bedrich       | 27/1/1895     | 30/8/1942     | p. 523    |
| Dusner    | Vilem         | 13/6/1898     | 14/8/1942     | p. 524    |
| Dux       | Viktor        | 1/6/1896      | 25/6/1942     | p. 524    |
| Edelstein | Frantisek     | 28/3/1896     | 8/6/1942      | p. 524    |
| Ehlich    | Jan           | 27/6/1925     | 24/7/1942     | p. 524    |
| Ehrlich   | Bedrich       | 17/3/1895     | 22/6/1942     | p. 524    |
| Ehrlich   | Jan, Ing.     | 13/8/1898     | 27/6/1942     | p. 524    |
| Einhorn   | Mojzis        | 19/5/1894     | 22/8/1942     | p. 525    |
| Eisler    | Josef         | 26/11/1906    | 10/9/1942     | p. 525    |
| Eisner    | Vilem         | 4/9/1905      | 16/7/1942     | p. 525    |
| Eisner    | Harry         | 28/1/1920     | 16/9/1942     | p. 526    |
| Ekstein   | Bedrich       | 23/9/1892     | 16/7/1942     | p. 526    |
| Felix     | Josef G.      | 26/7/1904     | 25/7/1942     | p. 190    |
| Fischhof  | Evzen         | 28/12/1907    | 10/8/1942     | p. 526    |
| Fischl    | Pavel         | 9/3/1897      | 28/6/1942     | p. 526    |
| Fleischl  | Valtr         | 5/12/1900     | 27/7/1942     | p. 494    |
| Forell    | Vitezslav     | 16/5/1899     | 18/7/1942     | p. 412    |
| Graumann  | Bedrich       | 13/3/1892     | 2/9/1942      | p. 527    |
| Grossmann | Jan           | 3/1/1920      | 4/9/1942      | p. 527    |
| Günsberg  | Karel         | 29/7/1918     | 4/8/1942      | p. 527    |

|           |            |            |           |        |
|-----------|------------|------------|-----------|--------|
| Günstling | Karel      | 23/8/1924  | 25/7/1942 | p. 527 |
| Guth      | Josef      | 12/4/1925  | 24/9/1942 | p. 527 |
| Guttman   | Jindrich   | 22/4/1899  | 22/7/1942 | p. 528 |
| Guttman   | Jiri       | 21/6/1925  | 28/7/1942 | p. 528 |
| Guttman   | Leopold    | 13/3/1899  | 1/9/1942  | p. 528 |
| Guttman   | Oavel      | 12/3/1921  | 25/7/1942 | p. 528 |
| Haag      | Milos      | 1/5/1907   | 22/7/1942 | p. 528 |
| Haas      | Arnost     | 10/1/1895  | 25/7/1942 | p. 528 |
| Haas      | Beno       | 20/9/1893  | 12/9/1942 | p. 528 |
| Haber     | Julius     | 12/11/1892 | 12/9/1942 | p. 528 |
| Hatschek  | Bedrich    | 7/4/1902   | 13/9/1942 | p. 423 |
| Hochberg  | Julius     | 18/11/1904 | 11/9/1942 | p. 452 |
| Kalla     | Robert     | 24/6/1924  | 14/8/1942 | p. 529 |
| Klein     | Otto       | 4/5/1899   | 23/5/1942 | p. 454 |
| Klement   | Richard    | 15/4/1898  | 27/7/1942 | p. 358 |
| Kohn      | Artur      | 2/6/1899   | 13/7/1942 | p.454  |
| Kohn      | Alexander  | 3/10/1924  | 1/8/1942  | p. 529 |
| Kohn      | Bedrich    | 13/3/1894  | 13/7/1942 | p. 529 |
| Kohn      | Edvard     | 3/1/1903   | 11/7/1942 | p. 529 |
| Kohn      | Emil       | 6/11/1894  | 7/9/1942  | p. 529 |
| Kohn      | Emil       | 12/2/1901  | 5/9/1942  | p. 529 |
| Kohn      | Frantisek  | 26/2/1910  | 6/1/1945  | p. 529 |
|           |            |            | [sic]     |        |
| Kohn      | Jan        | 26/3/1923  | 23/8/1942 | p. 529 |
| Kohn      | Karel      | 10/4/1914  | 31/7/1942 | p. 529 |
| Kohn      | Leo        | 28/6/1908  | 4/9/1942  | p. 529 |
| Kohn      | Leo        | 20/3/1892  | 9/7/1942  | p. 529 |
| Kohn      | Rudolf     | 4/4/1882   | 30/8/1942 | p. 529 |
| Kollin    | Otto       | 8/9/1904   | 7/9/1942  | p. 530 |
| Kowanitz  | Jindrich   | 10/4/1924  | 11/8/1942 | p. 530 |
| Kürschner | Oskar      | 24/10/1900 | 31/7/1942 | p. 484 |
| Löwy      | Maximilian | 13/2/1896  | 4/9/1942  | p. 469 |
| Löwy      | Alois      | 7/7/1897   | 8/8/1942  | p. 531 |
| Löwy      | Ervin      | 4/9/1898   | 7/8/1942  | p. 531 |
| Löwy      | Ervin      | 10/9/1895  | 10/8/1942 | p. 531 |
| Löwy      | Frantisek  | 26/9/1900  | 2/9/1942  | p. 531 |
| Löwy      | Josef      | 2/12/1896  | 25/9/1942 | p. 531 |
| Löwy      | Kurt       | 23/1/1927  | 4/8/1942  | p. 531 |
| Löwy      | Norbert    | 16/11/1900 | 20/7/1942 | p. 531 |

|             |           |            |           |        |
|-------------|-----------|------------|-----------|--------|
| Löwy        | Rudolf    | 16/6/1902  | 6/7/1942  | p. 531 |
| Löwy        | Valtr     | 2/6/1907   | 15/7/1942 | p. 531 |
| Löwy        | Viktor    | 29/4/1896  | 16/7/1942 | p. 531 |
| Mahler      | Hanus     | 24/4/1897  | 13/8/1942 | p. 241 |
| Mahler      | Petr      | 30/5/1926  | 4/9/1942  | p. 241 |
| Neumann     | Anton     | 1/4/1928   | 11/9/1942 | p. 533 |
| Neumann     | Frantisek | 11/8/1904  | 1/9/1942  | p. 533 |
| Neumann     | Jan       | 14/5/1909  | 16/8/1942 | p. 533 |
| Neumann     | Leo       | 1/4/1897   | 21/8/1942 | p. 533 |
| Neumann     | Oskar     | 4/7/1892   | 12/9/1942 | p. 533 |
| Neumann     | Valtr     | 13/12/1918 | 20/7/1942 | p. 533 |
| Neumann     | Viktor    | 12/11/1896 | 23/9/1942 | p. 533 |
| Neuschul    | Emil      | 17/1/1899  | 1/8/1942  | p. 534 |
| Nord        | Oskar     | 26/2/1899  | 17/9/1942 | p. 534 |
| Polak       | Frantisek | 21/12/1902 | 9/9/1942  | p. 165 |
| Polesi      | Karel     | 29/5/1896  | 30/7/1942 | p. 274 |
| Roll        | Vitezslav | 28/7/1921  | 12/9/1942 | p. 182 |
| Rosenbaum   | Ota       | 22/7/1893  | 7/7/1942  | p. 275 |
| Sinaiberger | Pavel     | 19/7/1910  | 31/8/1942 | p. 472 |
| Spitzer     | Simon     | 23/12/1902 | 28/6/1942 | p. 445 |
|             | Arnost    |            |           |        |
| Weiner      | Josef     | 29/8/1907  | 7/9/1942  | p. 490 |
| Weiss       | Bedrich   | 12/2/1908  | 30/8/1942 | p. 535 |
| Wurm        | Jan       | 2/2/1911   | 20/7/1942 | p. 535 |
| Zucker      | Hugo      | 1/11/1904  | 11/7/1942 | p. 490 |
| Zwicker     | Arnost    | 1/4/1916   | 20/8/1942 | p. 402 |

Table 2

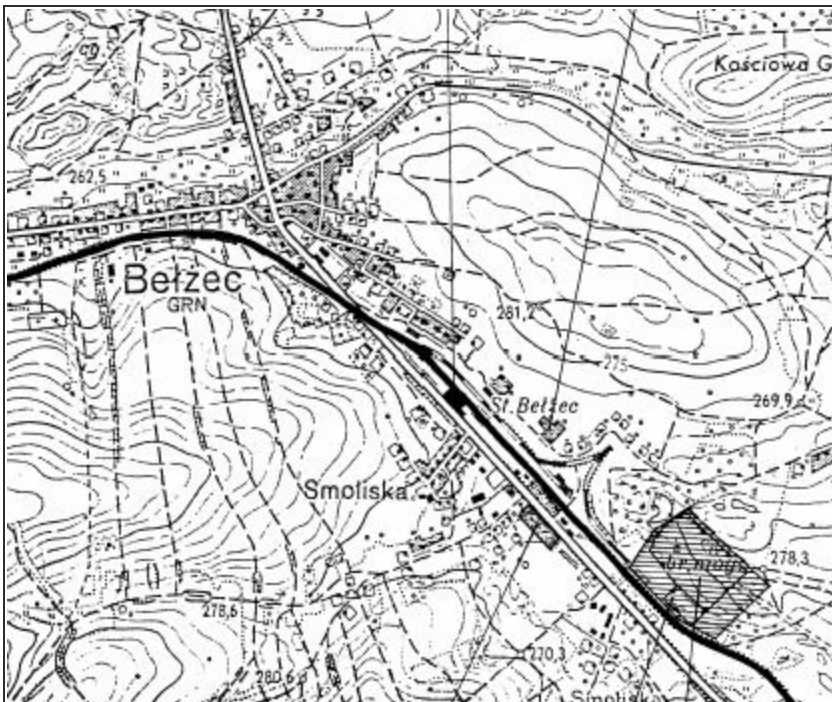
Jews deported from the ghettos of Theresienstadt/Terezin and Prague to the Lublin district and deceased at Lublin-Majdanek between May and September 1942 (dates given in dd/mm/yyyy).

| Date of deportation | origin         | destination | number of deaths |
|---------------------|----------------|-------------|------------------|
| 11/3/1942           | Theresienstadt | Izbica      | 7                |
| 17/3/1942           | Theresienstadt | Izbica      | 2                |
| 1/4/1942            | Theresienstadt | Piaski      | 21               |
| 18/4/1942           | Theresienstadt | Rejowiec    | 1                |
| 23/4/1942           | Theresienstadt | Lublin      | 101              |



|           |                              |     |
|-----------|------------------------------|-----|
| 27/4/1942 | Theresienstadt Lublin        | 118 |
| 9/5/1942  | Theresienstadt Sobibór/Osowa | 101 |
| 17/5/1942 | Theresienstadt Lublin        | 146 |
| 25/5/1942 | Theresienstadt Lublin        | 71  |
| 10/6/1942 | Prague Ujazdów               | 105 |
| 12/6/1942 | Theresienstadt Trawniki      | 96  |
| 13/6/1942 | Theresienstadt Majdanek      | 89  |
|           | Total:                       | 858 |

## Documents



Document 1: Topographical map of the Belzec area. The camp area is striped (bottom right).



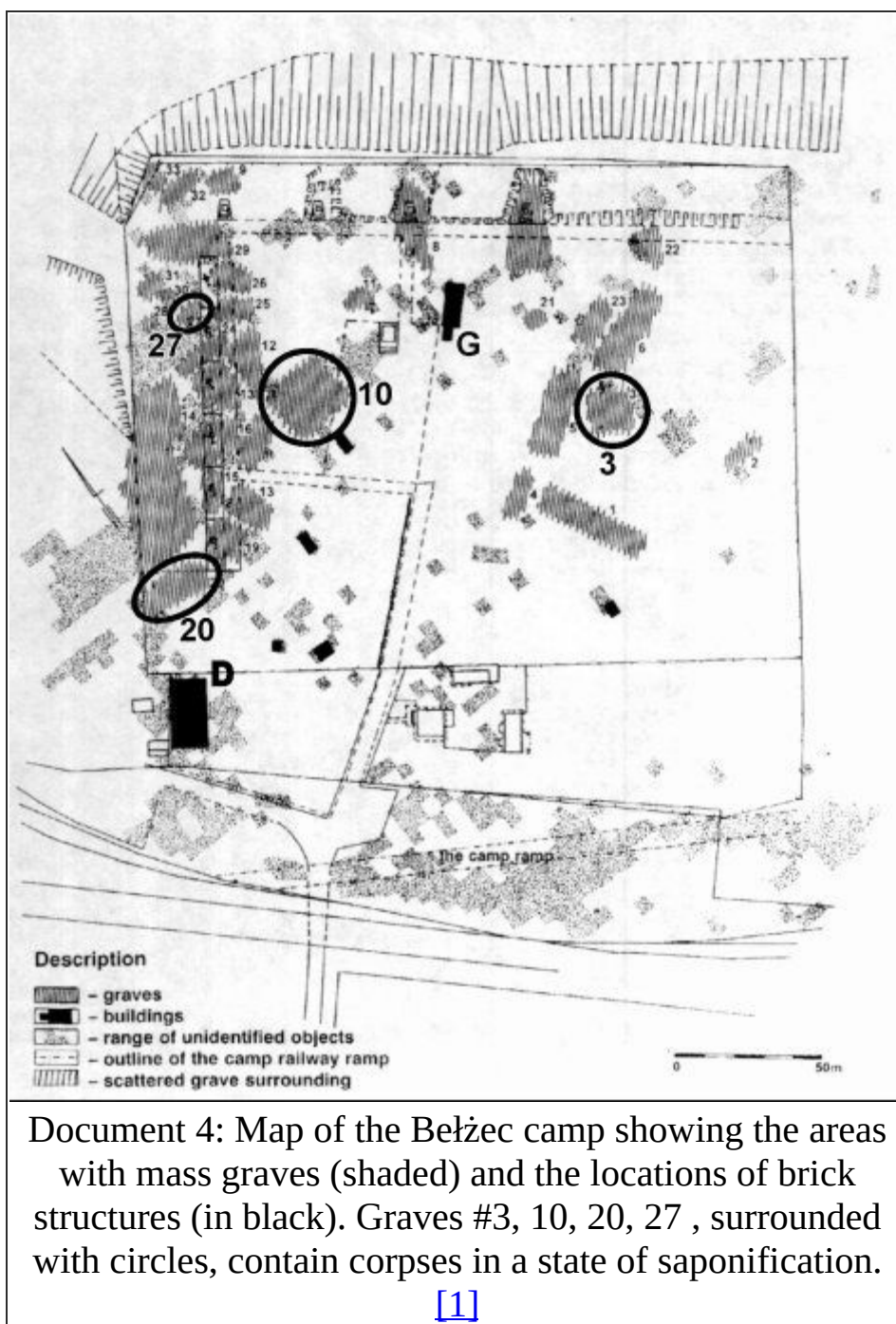
Document 2a: Entry gate to the camp, seen from the railroad line Lublin-Rava-Russkaya. © Carlo Mattogno



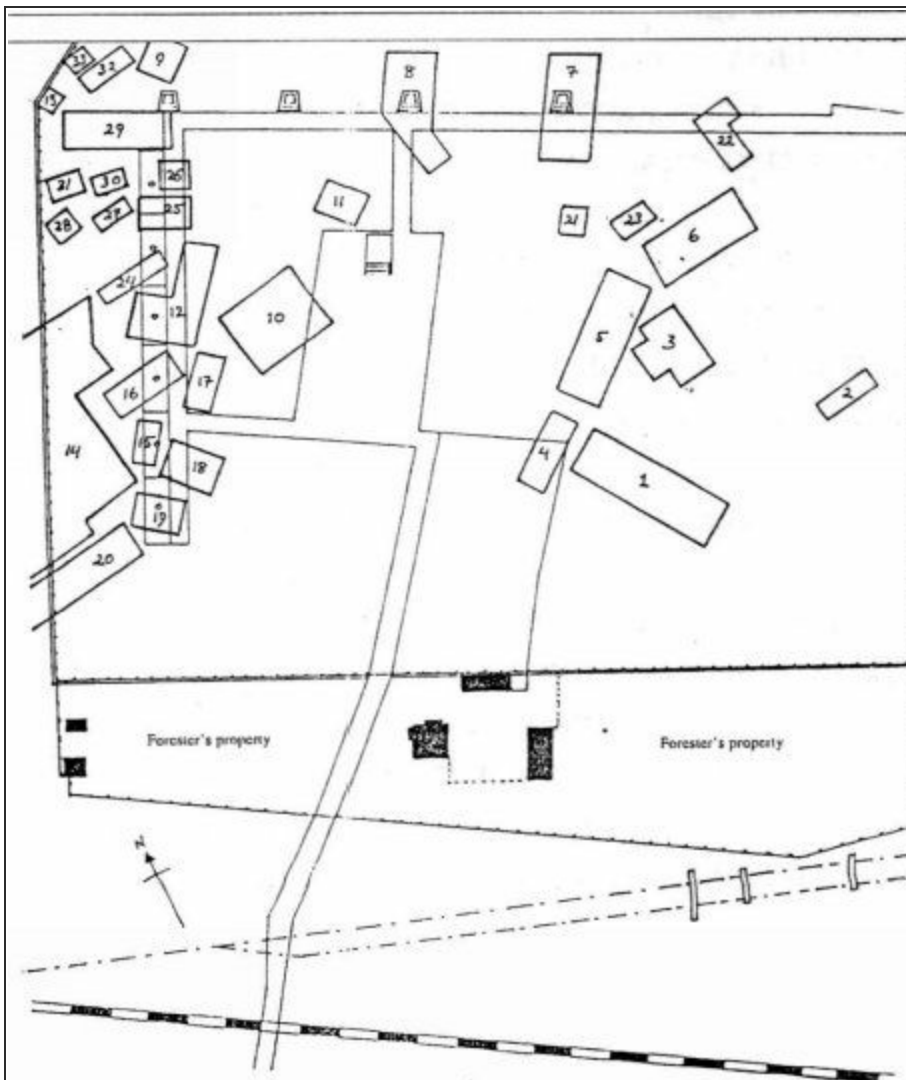
Document 2b: Close-up view of entry gate to the camp. © Carlo Mattogno



Document 3: State road no. 17, seen from the north-west corner of the camp. © Carlo Mattogno

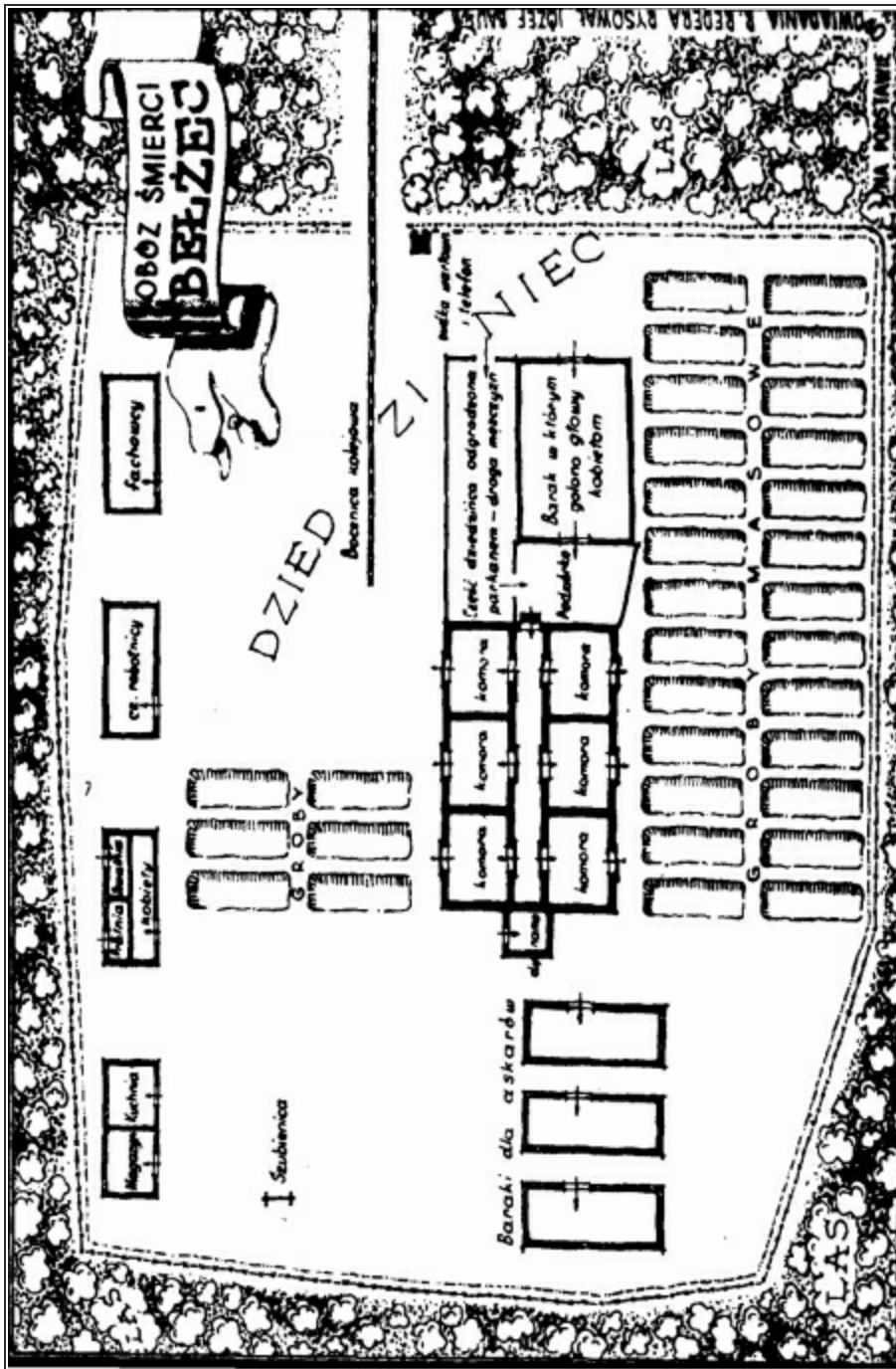


[1]

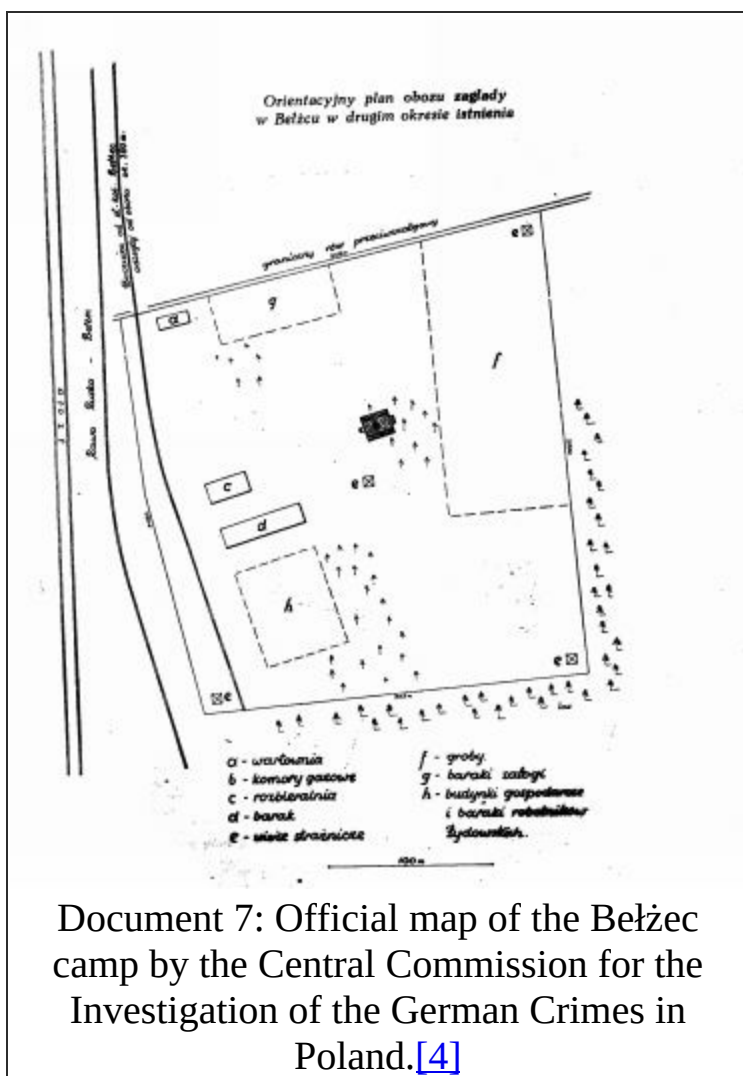


Document 5: Position and orientation of the mass graves.[\[2\]](#)



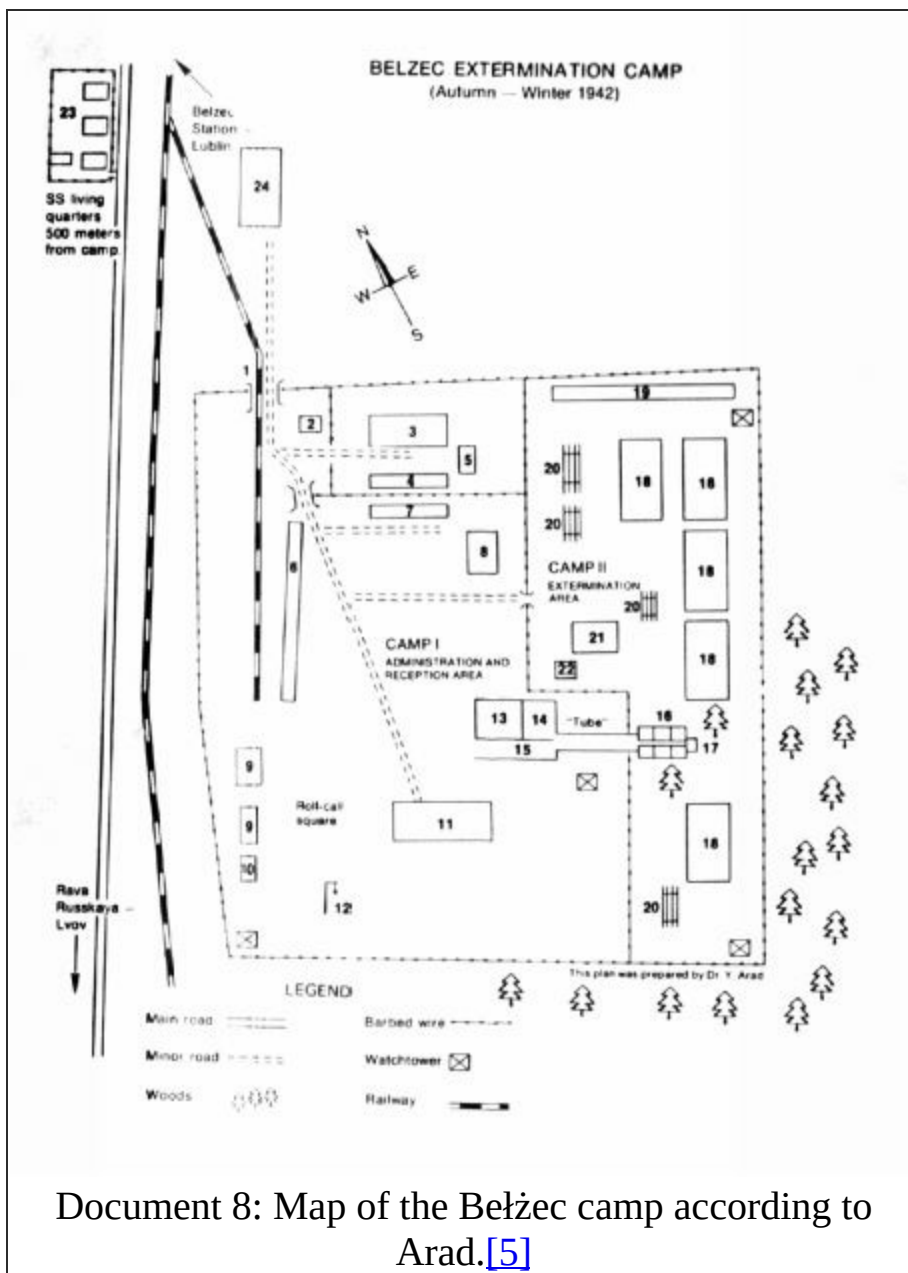


Document  
6: Map of  
the Belzec  
camp  
drawn by  
J. Bau  
after the  
indications  
of Rudolf  
Reder.[3]

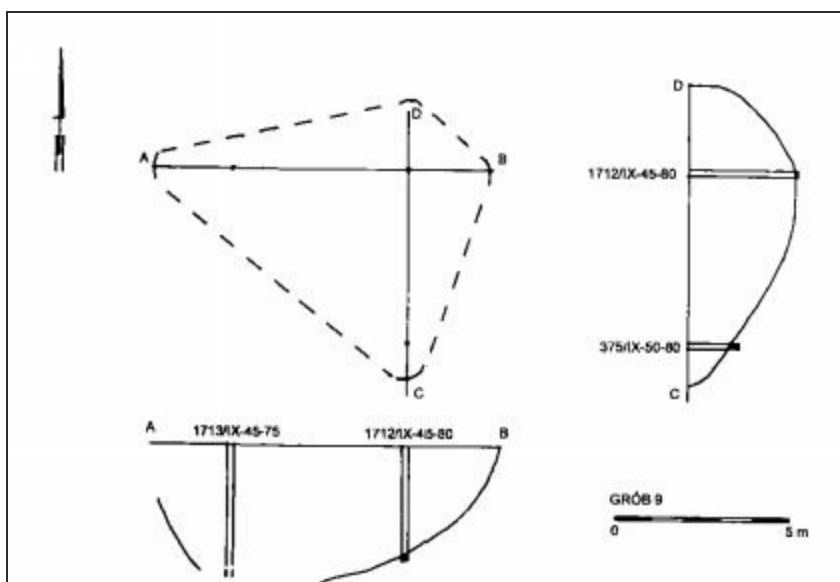


Document 7: Official map of the Bełżec camp by the Central Commission for the Investigation of the German Crimes in Poland.[\[4\]](#)

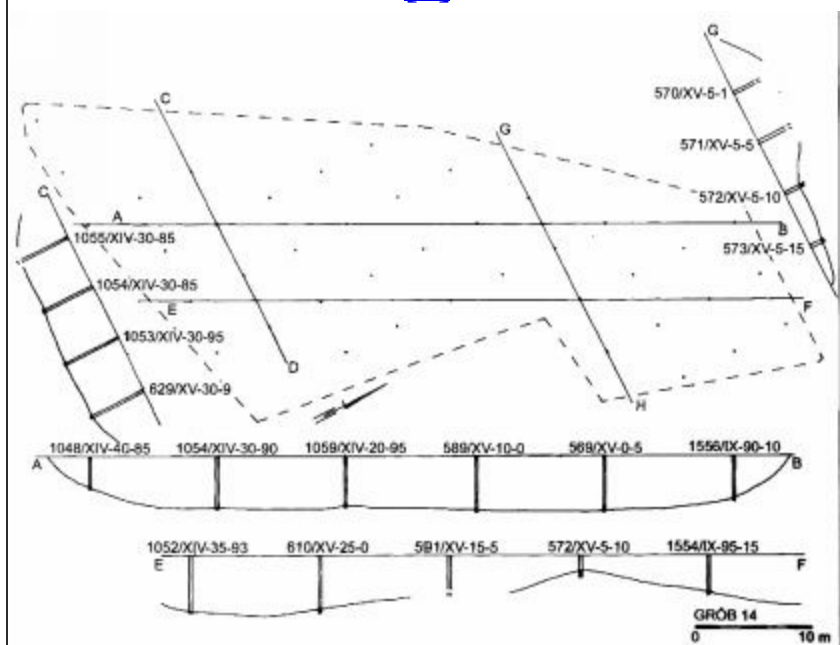




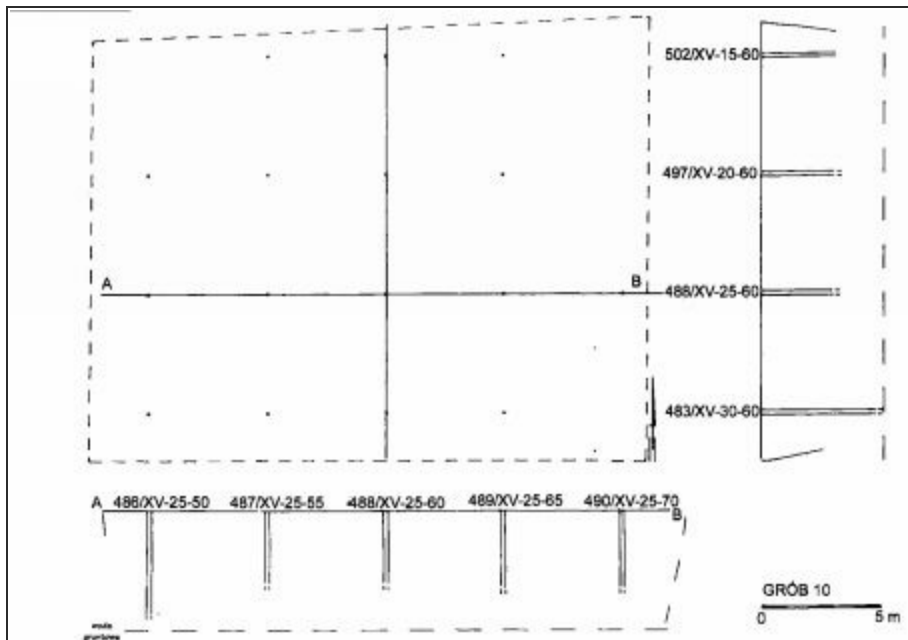
Document 8: Map of the Belzec camp according to Arad.[\[5\]](#)



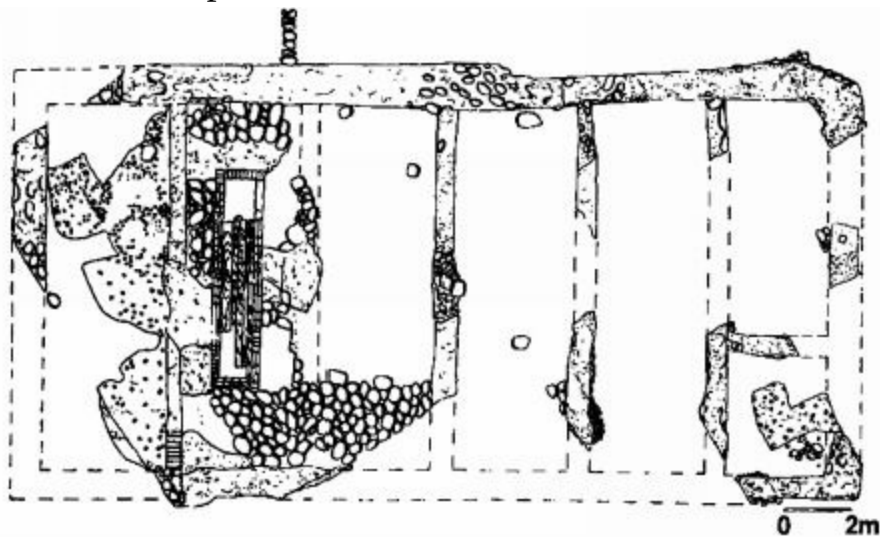
Document 9: Plan view and section of grave No. 6.  
[6]



Document 10: Plan view and section of grave No. 14.  
[7]



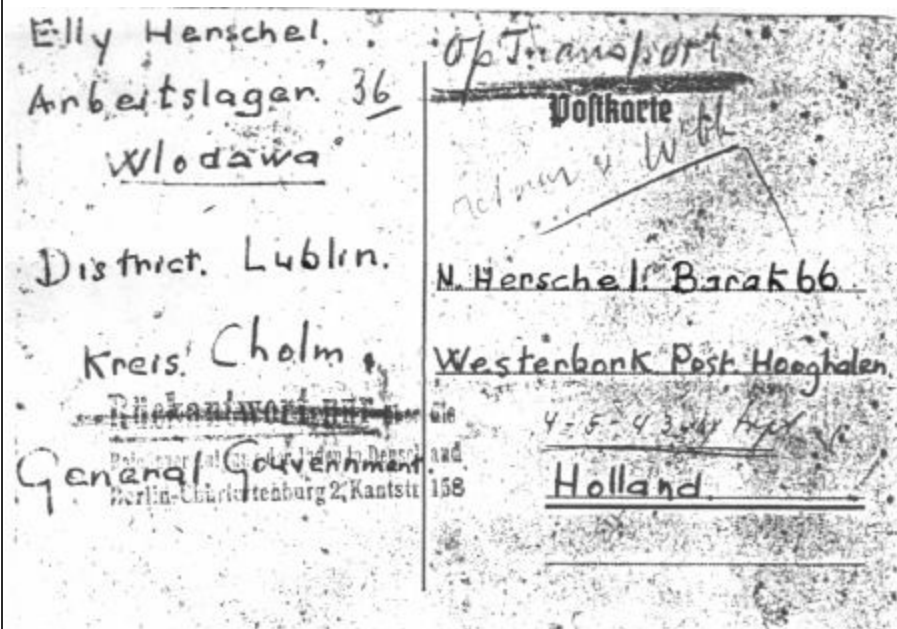
Document 11: Plan view and section of grave No. 10. Drillings evidencing the presence of corpses in a state of saponification are shown in bold.[\[8\]](#)



Document 12: Plan view of building D.[\[9\]](#)



Document 13: Photograph of the remains of building D.[\[10\]](#)



Document 14: Postcard sent on May 23, 1943, by Elly Herschel, Jewish inmate of the camp at Włodawa (Sobibór).[\[11\]](#)

Sicherungsbezirk Nord  
Einsatzkommando  
5. Komp. Pol. Rgt. 24

6  
Rawa Ruska, den 12. Dezember 1942.  
Straße der Wehrmacht Nr. 26

1) In der Zeit vom 6. mit 12. Dezember 1942 wurden befehlsgemäß behandelt:

|                  |       |
|------------------|-------|
| a) Banditen      | : --  |
| b) Helfershelfer | : --  |
| c) Geisteskranke | : 1   |
| d) Juden         | : 30  |
| zusammen         | : 31  |
|                  | ===== |

|               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| II. / Pol. 24 |              |
| Eing.         | 14. DEZ 1942 |
| Bef.          | Nr.          |

In der gleichen Zeit wurden festgenommen:

|                          |       |
|--------------------------|-------|
| a) Banditen              | : 1   |
| d) Diebe                 | : 1   |
| c) politisch Verdächtige | : 2   |
| zusammen                 | : 4   |
|                          | ===== |

An Gend.-Zug RR. übergeben: 1 Dieb  
=====

Arbeitsamt Rawa Ruska zum Arbeitseinsatz in Reich  
zugeführt: : 188  
=====

Arbeitsamt Lubaczow zugeführt: 35  
=====

Arbeitsamt Sokal zugeführt : 8  
=====

In der Berichtszeit war das Einsatzkdo. zur Judenumsiedlung  
in Rawa Ruska eingesetzt.

750 Juden die sich nach der Umsiedlung versteckt hielten  
wurden befehlsgemäß behandelt.

Verteiler:

|                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Gend.-Hauptmannschaft Lemberg: | 1   |
| II. / Pol. 24 Stanislaw        | : 1 |
| 5. / Pol. 24 Drohobycz         | : 1 |
| Einsatzkdo. RR.                | : 1 |
| zusammen                       | : 4 |

*Handwritten signature*  
Rev.-Leutnant d. Gd.

Document 15: Report of security district north, action  
commando, 5th company, 24th police regiment: 750  
Jews were hiding after resettlement. [\[12\]](#)

Bei den Aktionen selbst in der Zeit vom 7. bis 10.9.42 sind keine besonderen Vorkommnisse eingetreten. Die Zusammenarbeit der eingesetzten Organkräfte mit den Kräften der Sicherheitspolizei war gut und reibungslos.

7 Löcher

*Wassermann*  
Leutnant d. SchP. d. Res.  
und Komp.-Führer.

Document 16a: Signature underneath the Report of a deportation transport of Jews to Belzec, by *Leutnant der Schutzpolizei der Reserve* (lieutenant of protection police reserve) Wassermann of September 14, 1942 – GARF version.[\[13\]](#)

Bei den Aktionen selbst in der Zeit vom 7. bis 10.9.42 sind keine besonderen Vorkommnisse eingetreten. Die Zusammenarbeit der eingesetzten Organkräfte mit den Kräften der Sicherheitspolizei war gut und reibungslos.

*Wassermann*  
Leutnant d. Sch. d. Res.  
und Komp.-Führer.

Aus Dok. Samml. ZStL, UdSSR, Bd. 410, Bl. 508-510. (Reproduktion der »Leseabschrift« dieses Dokumentes, ebenfalls aus der Dok. Samml. ZStL)

Document 16b: Signature part of the same document as 16a, but the version as reproduced by Raul Hilberg.[\[14\]](#)

*Wassermann*  
Leutnant d. Sch. d. Res.  
und Komp.-Führer.

Document 16c: Overlay of signatures from documents 16a and 16b.



## Document Sources

GPDD 355a 2.

12. OMX de OMQ 1000 89 T ?  
Geheime Reichssache! An das Reichssicherheitshauptamt, zu  
Händen SS Obersturmbannführer RICHMANN, BERLIN ...rest missed..

13/15. OLQ de OMQ 1005 83 234 250  
Geheime Reichssache! An den Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspol.,  
zu Händen SS Obersturmbannführer HOSIM, KRAKAU.  
Betr: 14-tägige Meldung Einsatz REINHART. Bezug: dort.  
Fa. Zugang bis 31.12.42, L 12761, B O, B 515, T 10335 zusammen  
23611. Stand... 31.12.42, L 24733, B 434506, S 101370,  
T 71355, zusammen 1274166.  
SS und Pol.führer LUBLIN, NOEFLE, Sturmbannführer.

Public Record Office, Kew, England, HW 16/23, decode GPDD 355a distributed on January 15, 1943, radio telegrams nos. 12 and 13/15, transmitted on January 11, 1943. Government Code and Cypher School: German Police Section: Decrypts of German Police Communications during Second World War. See translation below.

Document 17: German Police Communication on deportation figures to the Reinhardt camps Lublin-Majdanek (L), Bełżec (B), Sobibór (S), and Treblinka (T).[\[15\]](#)

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[1] Report of the Soviet commission of inquiry, Aug. 24, 1944. GARF, 7021-115-9, pp. 103-110.

[2] Testimony of Zelda Metz, in N. Blumental (ed.), *Dokumenty i materiały*, vol. I, Łódź 1946, p. 210.

[3] According to witness R. Reder. Cf. below, Chapter II.4.

[4] Theses & Dissertations Press, Chicago 2004.

[5] *Ibidem*, pp. 111-137.

[6] Cf. Chapter V.1.

[7] For a summary of the official version see Israel Gutman (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 4 vols., Macmillan, New York 1990, here vol. 1, pp. 174-179.

[8] C. Mattogno, J. Graf, *Treblinka*, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp. 47-76.

[9] A. Pechersky, *The Sobibór Revolt*, State Edition Der Emes, Moscow 1946, in Yuri Suhl, *Ed essi si ribellarono. Storia della resistenza ebraica contro il nazismo*, Milan, 1969, p. 31.

[10] N. Blumental (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 2), p. 204.

[11] “gazowniami”

[12] “czasem puszczano prąd chlorku”

[13] N. Blumental (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 2), p. 211.

[14] “dusili chlorem”

[15] Z. Łukaszewicz, “Obóz zagłady w Sobiborze,” in *Biuletyn Głównej*

*Komisji Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich w Polsce*, Poznań 1947, p. 52

[16] Z. Klukowski, *Dziennik z lat okupacji*, Lublin 1959, p. 254.

[17] “*prądem elektrycznym*”

[18] “*gazami*”

[19] “*zwłoki palą*”

[20] “*Kronika oświęcimska nieznanego autora*,” in *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, Warsaw, no. 54, January-June 1954, p. 307.

[21] “*elektryzowano*”

[22] *Meldunek nadzwyczajny z miejsca tracenia w Bełżcu z 10.VII.42r*, SPP, Jcha 15, poz. 81. The report was later included as “Annex 3” in the long account (Sprawozdanie No. 6/42) drawn up in London on December 23, 1942, by the Interior Minister, St. Mikołajczyk, of the Polish government in exile. HILA, Stanford University, Box 3, pp. 63f.

[23] “*z płytą elektryczną*”

[24] Jacob Apenszlak (ed.), *The Black Book of Polish Jewry*, American Federation for Polish Jews, New York 1943, p. 131.

[25] *Polish Fortnightly Review*, December 1, 1942, p. 4.

[26] “250,000 Warsaw Jews Led to Mass Execution: Electrocuting Introduced As New Method of Mass Killing of Jews,” *Daily News Bulletin*, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, vol. XXIII, no. 273, November 25, 1942, p. 2.

[27] “Allies describe outrages on Jews,” *The New York Times*, December 20, 1942, p. 23.

[28] “Nazi Execution Mill Reported in Poland: Fugitive Tells of Mass Killings in Electrically Charged Vats,” *The New York Times*, February 12, 1944, p. 6.

[29] A. Silberschein, “*Die Hölle von Belzec*,” in *Die Judenausrottung in Polen*, vol. V, Geneva 1944, pp. 21f.

[30] A. Silberschein, “*Hinrichtungs- und Vernichtungslager Belzec*,” in *Die Judenausrottung in Polen*, Geneva 1944, vol. III, pp. 41f.

[31] *Soll ich meines Bruders Hüter sein? Weitere Dokumente zur Juden- und Flüchtlingsnot unserer Tage*, Evangelischer Verlag A.G. Zollikon, Zürich 1944, p. 56.

[32] Stefan Szende, *Der letzte Jude aus Poland*, Europa Verlag, Zürich 1945, pp. 290-292; Engl. Stefan Szende, Adolf Folkmann, *The Promise Hitler Kept*, V. Gollancz, London 1945/Roy, New York 1945, pp. 159-161.

[33] I. Ehrenburg, V. Grossman, *Le livre noir*, Actes Sud, 1995, pp. 1058f.

[34] GARF, 7021-67-82, p. 3.

[35] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1157 (translation from the Polish).

[36] Soviet prisoners of war.

[37] Armand Guérin, *Rawa Ruska*, Editions Oris, Paris 1945, p. 148.

[38] S. T. Norwind, *Martyrium eines Volkes*, 1945, pp. 102f.

- [39] I. Ehrenburg, V. Grossman, *op. cit.* (note 33), pp. 213f.
- [40] Cf. below, section 4.
- [41] S. Wiesenthal, "Seifenfabrik Belsetz," *Der neue Weg*, No. 19/20, Vienna 1946, p. 14.
- [42] W. Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret: An Investigation into the Suppression of Information about Hitler's "Final Solution"*, H. Holt, New York 1998, p. 230.
- [43] Cf. M. Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, Henry Holt, New York 1981, p. 93-95.
- [44] Foreign Office papers, 371/30923, xp 009642, pp. 78f., and 371/30917, xp 5365, pp. 78f.
- [45] Foreign Office papers, 371/30923, xp 009642, p. 73.
- [46] Foreign Office papers, 371/30924, xp 5365, pp. 121-124. Jacob Apenszlak (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 24), p. 122.
- [47] Jacob Apenszlak (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 24), pp. 135-138.
- [48] "Eye-Witness Report of a Secret Courier Fresh from Poland," *Voice of the Unconquered*, March 1943, p. 5.
- [49] *Ibidem*, p. 8.
- [50] In German in the text.
- [51] Jan Karski, *Story of a Secret State*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston 1944, pp. 339-351.
- [52] This promise was another infantile invention of Jan Karski.
- [53] E. Th. Wood, S. M. Jankowski, *Karski. How One Man Tried to Stop the Holocaust*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York 1994, pp. 128f.
- [54] Reproduced in E.Th. Wood, S.M. Jankowski, *Karski. Opowieść o emisariuszu*, Wydawnictwo Baran i Suszczyński, Państwowe Muzeum Oświęcim-Brzezinka, Kraków/Oświęcim 1996, documentary annex outside the text.
- [55] "Niespełona misja. Z profesorem Jenem Karskim kurierem polskiego podziemia w latach II wojny światowej rozmawia Maciej Kozłowski," in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, No. 11, 1987. (No page number shown in the photocopy in my possession).
- [56] This information is also in error for Treblinka, which is situated some 80 km northeast of Warsaw (by rail).
- [57] E.g., on Oct. 7, 2003, p. L37, Germany's highly renowned newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote: "[Historian Raul] Hilberg's last book to date [...] 'Sources of Holocaust Research,' has silently abandoned some of the most famous, but obviously also least reliable witnesses like Kurt Gerstein and Jan Karski. Thus, the denier and the propagandist are complementary figures of our times."
- [58] "On September 10th, 2002, Polish Foreign Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz unveiled a monument to Dr. Jan Karski on the campus of Georgetown University. The monument is crafted as a park bench with Karski sitting on it." [http://polish-jewish-heritage.org/Eng/monument\\_karski.htm](http://polish-jewish-heritage.org/Eng/monument_karski.htm). In 1999, the book by



Karski was published in Polish under the title *Tajne państwo: opowieść o polskim podziemiu*, Twój Styl, Warsaw 1999.

[59] T.J. O’Keefe, “A Fake Eyewitness to Mass Murder at Belzec,” in *The Revisionist*, No. 1, November 1999, p. 1.

[60] E. Jäckel, P. Longerich, J. Schoeps (eds.), *Enzyklopädie des Holocaust*, Argon Verlag, Berlin 1993, vol. II, p. 741; the earlier English edition of this encyclopedia does not mention Belżec in its entry on Karski at all: Israel Gutman (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 7), vol II, p. 787.

[61] The “Speciale-Mixer” of Giovanni Minoli, broadcast for the first time by RAI 2 on June 21, 1989, at 8:30 PM. Cf. in this respect my comments in *La soluzione finale: Problemi e polemiche*, Edizioni di Ar, Padua 1991, pp. 208-219.

[62] C. Lanzmann, *Shoah*, Fayard, Paris 1985, pp. 183-196.

[63] Cf. below, Chapter II.1.

[64] R. Reder, *Belżec*, Fundacja Judaica, Państwowe Muzeum Oświęcim-Brzezinka, Krakow 1999. Polish text and English translation with foreword by Jan Karski dated Washington, July 4, 1997, pp. 5 and 77.

[65] *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1942, vol. III, p. 775.

[66] The text received by the Vatican has the spelling “Belick.” *Actes et documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la seconde guerre mondiale. Le Saint Siège et les victimes de la guerre, janvier-1941-décembre 1942*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, vol. 8, 1974, p. 52. This is the only mention of the Belżec camp in the whole book; clearly it has been confused here with the Treblinka camp.

[67] I. Ehrenburg, V. Grossman, *op. cit.* (note 33), p. 214.

[68] S. Wiesel, “RIF,” in *Der neue Weg*, No. 17/18, Vienna 1945.

[69] <http://www.nizkor.org/features/techniques-of-denial/appendix-7-02.html>; cf. also Reuter press release of April 24, 1990, as published in, e.g., *The Daily Telegraph*, April 25, 1990, “Jewish Soap Tale was ‘Nazi Lie’”; cf. Mark Weber, “‘Jewish soap’,” *Journal of Historical Review*, 11(2) (1991), pp. 217-227.

[70] AGK, MSW London, 89, pp. 3f.

[71] URSS-93, pp. 41f.

[72] IMT, vol. VII, pp. 576f.

[73] Phonetic transliteration of Sobibór.

[74] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1136 (translation from Polish into German).

[75] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1223 (translation from Polish into German).

[76] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1226 (translation from Polish into German).

[77] AGK, OKBZN Kraków, 111, pp. 4-4a.

[78] Cał, Polish inch, corresponding to 2.4 cm.

[79] E. Szrojt, “Obóz zagłady w Belżcu,” in *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich w Polsce*, Poznan 1947, III, p. 36.

- [80] *Ibidem*, p. 35.
- [81] *Ibidem*, p. 41.
- [82] *Polish Charges against German War Criminals (Excerpts from some of those) Submitted to the United Nations War Crimes Commission by Dr. Marian Muszkat*, Główna Komisja Badania Niemieckich Zbrodni Wojennych w Polsce, Warsaw 1948, p. 226.
- [83] The account, in a number of versions, of SS *Obersturmführer* Kurt Gerstein who is said to have visited, in August of 1942 the extermination camps at Belżec and Treblinka. Imprisoned by the French, Gerstein died under mysterious circumstances (presumed suicide) on July 25, 1945. Cf. in this respect: C. Mattogno, *Il rapporto Gerstein: Anatomia di un falso*, Sentinella d'Italia, Monfalcone 1985; H. Roques, *The "Confessions" of Kurt Gerstein*, Institute for Historical Review, Costa Mesa 1989; C. Mattogno, J. Graf, *Treblinka*, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp. 41f. and 126-132 ("The 'Mission' of Kurt Gerstein").
- [84] C. Mattogno, J. Graf, *Treblinka*, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp. 74-76.
- [85] IMT, vol. VI, pp. 361-364, 424.
- [86] Leo Kelber, "Un bourreau des camps nazis avoue: 'J'ai exterminé jusqu'à 11.000 personnes par jour,'" *France Soir*, July 4, 1945, pp. 1f.
- [87] Military Court, Case 1, Nuremberg, proceedings of January 16, 1947, pp. 1806-1815. A long portion of the document was published on pp. 1808-1814.
- [88] Cf. in this respect my study *Il rapporto Gerstein*, *op. cit.* (note 83), pp. 129-137.
- [89] PS-1553, p. 6; PS-2170, p. 6; T-1310, p. 14.
- [90] Interrogation of December 29, 1945. AGK, OKBZN Kraków, 111, pp. 3-3a.
- [91] Rudolf Reder, *Belżec*, Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna przy C.K. Żydów Polskich – Oddział w Krakowie, Kraków 1946, pp. 44 and 46.
- [92] Nella Rost Hollander, *Belzec. Camara de gas. Tumba de 600.000 Mártires Judíos*, Stephen Wise Institute, World Jewish Congress in Uruguay, 1963, p. 4. Nella Rost was the author of the preface to the book of memoirs of Rudolf Reder quoted in the preceding note.
- [93] P. Vidal-Naquet, "Tesi sul revisionismo," in *Rivista di storia contemporanea*, Turin 1983, pp. 7f.
- [94] Cf. below, Chapter III.
- [95] Cf. below, Chapter III.1.
- [96] M. Tregenza, "Das vergessene Lager des Holocaust," in I. Wojak, P. Hayes (eds.), "Arisierung" im Nationalsozialismus, Volksgemeinschaft, Raub und Gedächtnis, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/Main, New York 2000, p. 246.
- [97] *Ibidem*, pp. 241f.
- [98] Cf. documents 1-3 in the Appendix.

- [99] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1129 (translation from Polish to German), testimony of S. Kozak.
- [100] M. Tregenza, *op. cit.* (note 96), pp. 246f.
- [101] Cf. following paragraph.
- [102] M. Tregenza, *op. cit.* (note 96), pp. 247f.
- [103] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1285, interrogation of May 8, 1961.
- [104] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1154 (translation from Polish into German).
- [105] *Ibidem*, p. 1144.
- [106] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, pp. 1129f. (translation from Polish into German).
- [107] It would be even more surprising that the Germans paid Poles to build the alleged gas chambers!
- [108] Y. Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka. The Operation Reinhard Death Camps*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1987, p. 25.
- [109] This explains the presence of the stoves. They were *Heißluftentwesungsöfen* = hot air disinfection ovens.
- [110] J.-C. Pressac, “*Enquête sur les camps de la mort*,” in *Historama-Histoire*, special issue 34, 1995, pp. 121.
- [111] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1150 (translation from Polish into German).
- [112] R. O’Neil, “*Bełżec: The ‘Forgotten’ Death Camp*,” in *East European Jewish Affairs*, 28(2) (1998-9), p. 59. In the caption on this page the author explains: “*All drawings by Michael Tregenza.*” Cf. document 5 in the Appendix.
- [113] GARF, 7021-149-99, p. 18.
- [114] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1225 (translation from the Polish into German).
- [115] E. Szrojt, *op. cit.* (note 79), pp. 43f.
- [116] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1118 (translation from the Polish into German).
- [117] The witness Eugeniusz G. mentioned the figure of 2 million (ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1136). R. Reder, as we have seen, takes it to 3 million.
- [118] A. Silberschein, *op. cit.* (note 30), p. 44.
- [119] A. Rückerl (ed.), *NS-Vernichtungslager im Spiegel deutscher Strafprozesse*, DTV-Verlag, Munich 1979, p. 136.
- [120] T. Berenstein, “*Eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej w dystrykcie Galicja (1941-1943)*,” in *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce*, 61, 1967, p. 29.
- [121] *Ibidem*, pp. 32-59.
- [122] Y. Arad, *op. cit.* (note 108), pp. 383-389.
- [123] *Ibidem*, p. 177.
- [124] R. O’Neil, “*Bełżec: A Reassessment of the Number of Victims*,” in *East European Jewish Affairs*, 29(1-2) (1999), p. 104.
- [125] M. Tregenza, *op. cit.* (note 96), p. 242.

- [126] *Ibidem*, p. 253.
- [127] Cf. below, Chapter IV.4.1.
- [128] Cf. below, Chapter V.3.
- [129] C. Mattogno, *op. cit.* (note 83); Mattogno, *L' "irritante questione" delle camere a gas ovvero da Cappuccetto Rosso ad ...Auschwitz. Risposta a Valentina Pisanty*, Graphos, Genoa 1998, pp. 76-121; C. Mattogno, J. Graf, Treblinka, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp. 126-132.
- [130] A. Chelain (ed.), *Faut-il fusiller Henri Roques?* Polémiques, Paris 1986. English translation: H. Roques, *op. cit.* (note 83); cf. A. Chelain (ed.), *La thèse de Nantes et l'affaire Roques*, Polémiques, Paris 1988.
- [131] C. Mattogno, *op. cit.* (note 83), Chapter VIII, pp. 129-137 (on the witness Rudolf Reder).
- [132] M. Tregenza, *op. cit.* (note 96), pp. 242f.
- [133] Rudolf Reder, Sara Beer, Hirszt Birder, Mordechai Bracht, Samuel Velser, Chaim Hirsztman, and a Jew nicknamed "Szpilke."
- [134] On March 19, 1946, Chaim Hirsztman appeared before the regional historical commission of Lublin, but he was murdered the same day after his interrogation had been adjourned. Therefore, we have only a very laconic testimony from his side (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny (Jewish Historical Institute), Warsaw, Report N° 1476). As far as its content is concerned, it is so irrelevant that it does not even appear in the extract of testimonies on Belzec presented by Marian Muszkat in the official report of the Polish government on the German crimes against Poland. *Polish Charges against German War Criminals...*, *op. cit.* (note 82), pp. 227-232.
- [135] The witness Wilhelm Pfannenstiel. Cf. following paragraph.
- [136] "[...] *et le nom de l'auteur du rapport, Kurt Gerstein, qui prétend avoir combattu cette politique d'atrocités.*"
- [137] "*dirigeants allemands responsables d'avoir ordonné la politique d'extermination des détenus dans divers camps par l'usage des chambres à gaz*", S. Friedländer, *Kurt Gerstein ou l'ambiguïté du bien*, Casterman, Tournai 1967, pp. 14f.; Engl. see Saul Friedländer, *Counterfeit Nazi: the ambiguity of good*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1969.
- [138] Rolf Günther, SS *Sturmbannführer*, head of *Abteilung* (department) IV-B-4a of the RSHA, under SS *Obersturmbannführer* Adolf Eichmann, head of *Abteilung* IV-B-4.
- [139] Interrogation No. 2288 of Prof. Dr. Pfannenstiel by Mr. von Halle on October 30, 1947, p. 6; Staatsarchiv Nuremberg, KV-Anklage, Interrogations, No. P 33.
- [140] *Ibidem*, p. 1.
- [141] *Ibidem*, p. 4.
- [142] *Ibidem*, p. 2.
- [143] *Ibidem*, pp. 4f.

- [144] DEutsche GESELLSCHAFT FÜR SCHÄDLINGSBEKÄMPFUNG – German Society for Pest Control.
- [145] Cf. for example the article “Zyklon B gegen KZ-Häftlinge. Bericht über ersten deutschen Giftgasprozess,” in *Die Neue Zeitung*, Nr. 34, March 22, 1949.
- [146] A. Rückerl (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 119), p. 83. Cf. following paragraph.
- [147] Hans Rothfels, “Augenzeugenbericht zu den Massenvergasungen,” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 1(2) (1953), pp. 177-194.
- [148] Letter published as a facsimile by W. Stäglich and U. Walendy in “NS-Bewältigung. Deutsche Schreibtischtäter,” *Historische Tatsachen* No. 5, Historical Review Press, Brighton 1977, p. 20.
- [149] L. Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la haine. Le IIIe Reich et les Juifs*, Calmann-Lévy, Paris 1951, pp. 221-224; Engl.: *Harvest of hate; the Nazi Program for the Destruction of the Jews of Europe*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, N.Y., 1954.
- [150] Interrogation of W. Pfannenstiel on June 6, 1950. ZStL, 208 AR-Z 252/59, vol. I, p. 44.
- [151] The book was published in Berlin by Colloquium Verlag in 1956; first Engl. ed.: Gerald Reitlinger, *The Final Solution*, Mitchell, London 1953.
- [152] Interrogation of W. Pfannenstiel on November 9, 1959. ZStL, Z 252/59, vol. I, pp. 138f.
- [153] Interrogation of W. Pfannenstiel on November 8, 1963. ZStL, Z 252/59, vol. I, p. 15.
- [154] PS-1553, p. 6.
- [155] Interrogation of W. Pfannenstiel on June 6, 1950. ZStL, 208 AR-Z 252/59, vol. I, p. 43.
- [156] PS-1553, p. 7.
- [157] F. P. Berg, “Diesel Gas Chambers: Ideal for Torture – Absurd for Murder,” in G. Rudolf (ed.), *Dissecting the Holocaust*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Theses & Dissertations Press, Chicago, 2003, p. 439 and corresponding references to the specialist literature in note 22.
- [158] SS-Brigadeführer Odilo Globocnik, deputy of Heinrich Himmlers.
- [159] Interrogation of W. Pfannenstiel on June 6, 1950. ZStL, 208 AR-Z 252/59, vol. I, pp. 42f.
- [160] *Ibidem*, pp. 43f.
- [161] Interrogation of W. Pfannenstiel on November 8, 1963. ZStL, Z 252/59, vol. I, p. 16.
- [162] Interrogation of W. Pfannenstiel on April 25, 1960. ZStL, Z 252/59, vol. I, p. 587.
- [163] Interrogation of W. Pfannenstiel on June 6, 1950. ZStL, 208 AR-Z 252/59, vol. I, p. 42.

- [164] Interrogation of W. Pfannenstiel on November 9, 1959. ZStL, Z 252/59, vol. I, p. 137.
- [165] Interrogation of W. Pfannenstiel on April 25, 1960. ZStL, Z 252/59, vol. I, p. 585.
- [166] Interrogation of W. Pfannenstiel on November 9, 1959. ZStL, Z 252/59, vol. I, p. 136.
- [167] With the term “*Desinfizierung*” (disinfection) Pfannenstiel meant “*Entwesung*” (disinfestation).
- [168] Interrogation of W. Pfannenstiel on June 6, 1950, ZStL, 208 AR-Z 252/59, vol. I, p. 43.
- [169] Interrogation of W. Pfannenstiel on November 9, 1959, ZStL, Z 252/59, vol. I, pp. 136f.
- [170] Interrogation on April 25, 1960, ZStL, Z 252/59, vol. I, p. 585.
- [171] *Ibidem*, p. 586.
- [172] Interrogation of W. Pfannenstiel on November 8, 1963. ZStL, Z 252/59, vol. I, p. 15.
- [173] Interrogation of April 25, 1960, ZStL, Z 252/59, vol. I, p. 588.
- [174] Interrogation of W. Pfannenstiel on November 9, 1959. ZStL, Z 252/59, vol. I, p. 137.
- [175] *Ibidem*, p. 138.
- [176] PS-2170, p. 3.
- [177] Interrogation on April 25, 1960, ZStL, Z 252/59, vol. I, p. 587.
- [178] PS-1553, p. 3.
- [179] Interrogation of W. Pfannenstiel on November 8, 1963. ZStL, Z 252/59, vol. I, p. 16.
- [180] Interrogation of W. Pfannenstiel on November 9, 1959, ZStL, Z 252/59, vol. I, p. 139.
- [181] PS-2170, p. 6.
- [182] PS-1553, p. 4.
- [183] Interrogation of W. Pfannenstiel on November 8, 1963. ZStL, Z 252/59, vol. I, p. 16.
- [184] Interrogation of W. Pfannenstiel on June 6, 1950. ZStL, 208 AR-Z 252/59, vol. I, p. 44
- [185] PS-1553, pp. 4f.
- [186] Interrogation of W. Pfannenstiel on November 9, 1959. ZStL, Z 252/59, vol. I, pp. 139f.
- [187] Interrogation of W. Pfannenstiel on April 25, 1960. ZStL, Z 252/59, vol. I, pp. 583-588.
- [188] *Ibidem*, pp. 587f.



[189] As we have seen above, in the interrogation on June 6, 1950, he had only said that the corpses had simply been “*in einer Grube aufgeschichtet*” (piled up in a pit), but not burnt.

[190] He falsified the surface area of the alleged gas chambers by writing 93 square meters instead of Gerstein’s 25 and omitting Gerstein’s figure for their volume (45 cubic meters). Poliakov realized full well that the correct quotation alone (700 to 800 persons in 25 square meters and 45 cubic meters) would have sufficed to disqualify the entire Gerstein report. Concerning Poliakov’s manipulations cf. in this respect my study *Il rapporto Gerstein, op. cit.* (note 83), pp. 208-227.

[191] A. Rückerl (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 119), pp. 83f.

[192] Eugen Kogon, Hermann Langbein, Adalbert Rückerl *et al.* (eds.), *Nazi Mass Murder*, Yale, New Haven 1993, pp. 102-138, here p. 121.

[193] Interrogation of J. Oberhauser on December 12, 1962. ZStL, 208 AR-Z 252/59, pp. 1683f.

[194] E. Kogon *et al.* (eds.), *op. cit.* (note 191), p. 121f.

[195] Interrogation of J. Oberhauser on December 12, 1962. ZStL, 208 AR-Z 252/59, p. 1685.

[196] Interrogation of Werner Karl Dubois on September 16, 1961. ZStL, 208 AR-Z 252/59, p. 1398.

[197] *Ibidem*, p. 1402.

[198] *Ibidem*, p. 1396.

[199] *Ibidem*, p. 1394.

[200] Interrogation of Heinrich Gley on May 8, 1961. ZStL, 208 AR-Z 252/59, p. 1291.

[201] Interrogation of Robert Jühns on October 11, 1961. ZStL, 208 AR-Z 252/59, p. 1465.

[202] Interrogation of Karl Alfred Schluch on April 11, 1962. ZStL, 208 AR-Z 252/59, p. 1247.

[203] Interrogation of Karl Alfred Schluch on November 10, 1961. ZStL, 208 AR-Z 252/59, p. 1512.

[204] *Urteilsbegründung* (judicial opinion) in the Belzec trial, in A. Rückerl (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 119), p. 135.

[205] ZStL, 8AR-Z 252/59, p. 1131.

[206] According to F. Flury, the concentration of CO at 5,000 p.p.m. is “*in 5-10 Minuten tödlich*” (lethal within 5-10 minutes). F. Flury, F. Zernik, *Schädliche Gase, Dämpfe, Nebel, Rauch- und Staubarten*, Verlag von Julius Springer, Berlin 1931, p. 209.

[207] Interrogation of Karl Alfred Schluch on November 10, 1961. ZStL, 208 AR-Z 252/59, p. 1513.

[208] PS-2170, p. 6.

[209] Interrogation of Karl Alfred Schluch on November 10, 1961. ZStL, 208



AR-Z 252/59, p. 1514.

[210] ZStL, 8 AR-Z 252/59, p. 1129.

[211] Interrogation of Erich Fuchs, ZStL, 208 AR-Z 252/59, pp. 1782f.

[212] *Ibidem*, p. 1783.

[213] Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa/United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Warsaw/Washington 2000.

[214] The Council for the Protection of Memory and Martyrdom, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Warsaw-Washington 2000.

[215] A. Kola, *Bełżec: The Nazi Camp for Jews in the light of archeological sources: Excavations 1997-1999*, *op. cit.* (note 213), pp. 38-40. The imperfect English in the following excerpts is derived from the USHMM's English translation of Kola's Polish original.-ed.

[216] Actually 0.59 hectares (about 1.5 acres). Cf. below.

[217] In the southeast, the original surface area of the camp extended beyond the present boundary and measured about 6.2 hectares.

[218] Dimension taken from the drawing.

[219] Assuming an average depth of 4 meters.

[220] N. Blumental (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 2), p. 223.

[221] AGK, OKBZN Kraków, 111, p. 4.

[222] PS-1553, p. 7.

[223] PS-2170, p. 6.

[224] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1227 (translation from Polish into German).

[225] A. Kola, *Bełżec...*, *op. cit.* (note 213), p. 19. Cf. document 4 in the Appendix.

[226] R. O'Neil, *op. cit.* (note 112), p. 59. Cf. document 5 in the Appendix.

[227] R. Reder, *op. cit.* (note 91), p. 43. Cf. document 6 in the Appendix.

[228] A. Kola, *Bełżec...*, *op. cit.* (note 213), p. 7.

[229] E. Szrojt, *op. cit.* (note 79), insert without page number. A. Kola has also shown this map without any commentary; cf. document 7 in the Appendix.

[230] Y. Arad, *op. cit.* (note 108), p. 437. Cf. document 8.

[231] As the graves No. 1, 9, 12, 14, 22 and 29. Cf. documents 9, 10 in the Appendix.

[232] <http://digilander.libero.it/fadange/medicina%20legale/tana.htm>

[233] R. O'Neil, *op. cit.* (note 112), p. 54.

[234] M. Tregenza, *op. cit.* (note 96), p. 258.

[235] *Amtliches Material zum Massenmord von Katyn* (Official documents concerning the mass murders at Katyn), Berlin 1943.

[236] *Amtliches Material zum Massenmord von Winniza* (Official documents concerning the mass murders at Vinnytsya), Berlin 1944.

- [237] A. Kola, *Bełżec...*, *op. cit.* (note 213), p. 15.
- [238] *Ibidem*, pp. 15, 17f.
- [239] *Ibidem*, p. 36.
- [240] I have not taken into account grave No. 27, because A. Kola has not provided the diagram of his probes, and verification is thus impossible.
- [241] Cf. document 11 in the Appendix.
- [242] A. Kola, *Bełżec...*, *op. cit.* (note 213), p. 22.
- [243] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1121 (translation from Polish into German).
- [244] *Protokoll der Leichenschau* (report of coroner), October 13, 1945. ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, pp. 1123f. (translation from Polish into German).
- [245] Cf. next paragraph.
- [246] Y. Arad, *op. cit.* (note 108), pp. 170f.
- [247] Cf. in this respect C. Mattogno, J. Graf, *Treblinka*, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp. 217-229.
- [248] *Ibidem*, pp. 141-143.
- [249] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1227 (translation from Polish into German).
- [250] *Ibidem*, p. 1132.
- [251] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1119: “*Es brannten zugleich mehrere solche Feuer*” (Several such fires were burning simultaneously).
- [252] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1145: “*Zu gleicher Zeit konnten mehrere Haufen brennen, doch habe ich persönlich nur 1 großes Feuer und einen Rauch auf dem Lagerhügel gesehen*” (Several piles could burn at the same time, but I saw only one large fire and a [column of] smoke on the camp hill.)
- [253] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1128: “*Ich habe gesehen, daß zur gleichen Zeit 1-3 Feuer brannten*” (I have seen 1 to 3 fires burning simultaneously).
- [254] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1136: “*Wie ich gesehen habe, brannten zugleich drei Haufen*” (From what I have seen, 3 piles were burning simultaneously).
- [255] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1223: “[...] *diese verbrannte man an drei Stellen*” (...those were burnt at three sites).
- [256] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1140: “*Gleichzeitig brannten 3-4 Scheiterhaufen*” (3 to 4 pyres were burning simultaneously).
- [257] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1160: “*Gleichzeitig brannten 4-5 Feuerstellen im oberen Teil des Lagers*” (4 to 5 fire sites were burning simultaneously in the upper part of the camp).
- [258] A. Rückerl (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 119), pp. 142f.
- [259] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1286.
- [260] Y. Arad, *op. cit.* (note 108), pp. 172f.
- [261] C. Mattogno, J. Graf, *Treblinka*, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp. 137f.
- [262] This also results from A. Kola’s data: (21,310÷5,919 =) 3.60 meters of

depth utilized for the burials.

[263] C. Mattogno, J. Graf, *Treblinka*, *op. cit.* (note 4), p. 145f.

[264] *Ibidem*, p. 151f.

[265] J.C. Ball, *Air Photo Evidence: Auschwitz, Treblinka, Majdanek, Sobibor, Bergen Belsen, Belzec, Babi Yar, Katyn Forest*, Ball Resource Services Limited, Delta, B.C., Canada, 1992, pp. 94f.

[266] C. Mattogno, J. Graf, *Treblinka*, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp. 146-148.

[267] *Ibidem*, p. 149.

[268] *Ibidem*, p. 150.

[269] As for example in the samples 394/XVI-70-75, 395/XVI-70-80, 396/XVI-65-80, 400/XVI-65-50, 401/XVI-65-45, 474/XV-40-55, 478/XV-35-60, 600/XV-20-45, 607/XV-20-15, 612-XV-25-10, and others.

[270] In the samples 281-XVI-95-30, 282/XVI-95-35, 288/XVI-90-30, 289/XVI-90-25, 290/XVI-90-20, 291/XVI-90-15, 292/XVI-90-10, 295/XVI-85-0, 296/XVI-85-10, 300/XVI-85-30 336/XVI-80-35, 337/XVI-80-30, and 341/XVI-80-10.

[271] M. Tregenza, *op. cit.* (note 96), p. 257.

[272] Incineration of the corpses involved burning up the bones as well as the flesh, so Kola includes the unburnt ones in the category “*human bones and wax-fat mass*” discussed above.

[273] C. Mattogno, J. Graf, *Treblinka*, *op. cit.* (note 4), p. 139.

[274]  $62,000 - 20,800 = 41,200 \text{ m}^2$ .

[275] Thus, the statement of the witness Karl Alfred Schluch regarding a mass burial of this size cannot be true.

[276] A. Kola, *Belzec...*, *op. cit.* (note 213), p. 65.

[277] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1132f (translation from Polish into German).

[278] *Ibidem*, p. 1119.

[279] *Ibidem*, p. 1135.

[280] *Ibidem*, p. 1227.

[281] A. Kola, *Belzec...*, *op. cit.* (note 213), pp. 21-39.

[282] *Ibidem*, pp. 14-18.

[283] C. Mattogno, J. Graf, *Treblinka*, *op. cit.* (note 4), p. 77.

[284] *Ibidem*, p. 88.

[285] The camp was situated on a slight incline with a difference of about 10 meters between the lower portion, near the railway, and the highest point.

[286] A. Kola, *Belzec...*, *op. cit.* (note 213), p. 22.

[287] *Ibidem*, p. 21.

[288] C. Mattogno, J. Graf, *Treblinka*, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp. 139f.

[289] R. O’Neil, *op. cit.* (note 112), p. 56.

[290] For example E. Ukraiński and S. Kozak. ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, pp. 1119 and 1131.

[291] For the corresponding passage see § 9a of the report by the prosecutor of Zamość dated April 11, 1946, *op. cit.* (note 76).

[292] R. O’Neil, *op. cit.* (note 112), p. 50. Cf. also I. Gutman (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 7), vol. I, p. 178.

[293] According to the official historiography, these detainees were transferred to that camp to be murdered there. However, Tregenza states: “*After the dissolution of the Bełżec extermination camp, Sara Beer, together with a group of 20 to 25 Jewesses, was transferred to the Jewish work camp at Trawniki and from there to the concentration camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Sara Beer survived the ‘death march’ from Auschwitz to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in January 1945 and was freed by British units on April 15, 1945.*” (M. Tregenza, *op. cit.* (note 96), p. 260). Hence, the SS at Bełżec were not so anxious to eliminate ‘eye-witnesses’ after all!

[294] See Chapter V.

[295] A. Kola, *Bełżec...*, *op. cit.* (note 213), p. 61.

[296] *Ibidem*, note 28 on p. 61.

[297] A. Rückerl (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 119), p. 133.

[298] I. Gutman (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 7), Vol. I, p. 178.

[299] Cf. document 6 in the Appendix.

[300] But, as we have seen in Chapter III, W. Pfannenstiel mentioned a width of 3 meters!

[301] Cf. Chapter II.3.

[302] A. Kola, *Bełżec...*, *op. cit.* (note 213), p. 55.

[303] Cf. document 12 in the Appendix.

[304] A. Kola, *Bełżec...*, *op. cit.* (note 213), p. 56.

[305] *Ibidem*, pp. 55f., photographs 71 and 72; cf. document 13 in the Appendix.

[306] A. Kola, *Bełżec...*, *op. cit.* (note 213), p. 57.

[307] *Ibidem*, p. 64.

[308] ZStL, 252/59, vol. I, p. 1130 (translation from Polish into German).

[309] A. Kola, *Bełżec...*, *op. cit.* (note 213), p. 65.

[310] *Ibidem*, p. 66.

[311] As I have indicated above, the remains measured 26 m × 12 m according to the survey by A. Kola.

[312] A. Kola, *Bełżec...*, *op. cit.* (note 213), p. 67.

[313] R. O’Neil, *op. cit.* (note 112), p. 55.

[314] A project for the construction of roads of strategic importance and for technical improvement of the entire transport infrastructure of the Government General.

Cf. S. Piotrowski, *Dziennik Hansa Franka*, Wydawnictwo Prawnicze, Warsaw 1956, p. 218 (*Arbeitssitzung* [working session] of September 20, 1940).

[315] A. Silberschein, *op. cit.* (note 29), p. 8.

[316] T. Berenstein, “*Obozy pracy przymusowej dla Żydów w dystrykcie lubelskim*,” in *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego w Polsce*, 22, 1957, pp. 5f.

[317] Jüdisches Historisches Institut Warschau (ed.), *Faschismus-Getto-Massenmord. Dokumentation über Ausrottung und Widerstand der Juden in Polen während der zweiten Weltkriege*, Röderberg-Verlag, Frankfurt/Main 1960, p. 219.

[318] *Ibidem*, p. 221.

[319] *Ibidem*, p. 231.

[320] N. Blumental (ed.), *op. cit.*, (note 2), pp. 220f.

[321] “*aufgelöst*”

[322] Jüdisches Historisches Institut Warschau (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 316), p. 217.

[323] E. Dziadosz, J. Marszałek, “*Więzienia i obozy w dystrykcie lubelskim w latach 1939-1944*,” in *Zeszyty Majdanka*, 3, 1969, p. 61.

[324] RGVA, 1323-2-292b, p. 129.

[325] RGVA, 1323-2-292b, pp. 61f.

[326] RGVA, 1323-2-292b, pp. 40-42. A “*Leseabschrift*” (reading copy) of this document was reproduced by R. Hilberg in the book *Sonderzüge nach Auschwitz*, Dumjahn Verlag, Mainz 1981, pp. 194-197. Although claiming to be an identical text, it shows substantial formal differences from the document conserved at the RGVA: It is an original typescript, while the RGVA document is a carbon copy; it does not show runic characters for SS, which are, however, present in the RGVA version; it does not have handwritten annotations and has a different line width, which causes the typescript to be 4 pages long as against 3 for the RGVA version. The signature of Wassermann is identical for the two versions to the point of seeming to have been copied in, see Document 16 in the Appendix.

[327] RGVA, 1323-2-292b, p. 6. Cf. document 15 in the Appendix.

[328] RGVA, 1323-2-292b, p. 29.

[329] RGVA, 1323-2-292b, p. 7.

[330] C. Mattogno, J. Graf, *Treblinka*, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp. 266f.

[331] Peter Witte, Stephen Tyas, “*A New Document on the Deportation and Murder of the Jews during ‘Einsatz Reinhardt’ 1942*,” in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, no. 3, Winter 2001, pp. 469f.

[332] According to *Faschismus-Getto-Massenmord* (note 316) and Reitlinger (note 151), Höfle’s first name was Hans, but according to R. Hilberg (note 325) and the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (note 7), it is Hermann.

[333] C. Mattogno, J. Graf, *Treblinka*, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp. 235-238.

[334] Józef Kermisz, *Dokumenty i Materiały do dziejów okupacji niemieckiej w Polsce*, vol. II: “*Akce*” i “*Wysiedlenia*,” Warsaw-Lodz-Krakow 1946, p. 32f.

- [335] E. Jäckel *et al.* (eds.), *op. cit.* (note 60), vol. II, p. 619. Not included in the English edition by I. Gutman, *op. cit.* (note 7).
- [336] Jüdisches Historisches Institut Warschau (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 316), p. 271.
- [337] Cf. the transport list in C. Mattogno, J. Graf, *Treblinka*, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp. 242-244.
- [338] Osowa is a small community located a few kilometers southwest of the Sobibór camp.
- [339] Cf. below.
- [340] Cf. Table 1.
- [341] M. Kryl, "Deportacja więźniów żydowskich z Terezina i Pragi na Lubelszczyznę," in *Zeszyty Majdanka*, XI, 1983, pp. 33-35.
- [342] *Ibidem*, p. 35, cf. Table 2.
- [343] J. Kielboń, "Księga więźniów zmarłych na Majdanek w 1942 R. Analiza dokumentu," in *Zeszyty Majdanka*, XV, 1993, p. 114.
- [344] *Ibidem*, p. 113.
- [345] GARF, 7021-107-3, pp. 226-235.
- [346] Z. Leszczyńska, "Transporty więźniów do obozu Majdanku," in *Zeszyty Majdanka*, IV, 1969, p. 184
- [347] The figure is based on the mortality rate of the Czech and Slovak Jews, i.e.  $(4.064 \div 18.300 \times 100 =) 22.2\%$  applied to the 806 ascertained deaths of the German and Austrian Jews:  $(802 \times 100 \div 22.2) \approx 3.600$ .
- [348] Z. Leszczyńska, *op. cit.* (note 345), p. 189.
- [349] GARF, 7021-107-3, p. 234.
- [350] C. Mattogno, J. Graf, *Treblinka*, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp. 259-261.
- [351] Włodawa was located about 10 km from Sobibór.
- [352] J. Schelvis, *Vernichtungslager Sobibór*, Metropol Verlag, Berlin 1998, pp. 154f.
- [353] Date entered by the detainee in the text of the postcard.
- [354] ROD, c[2]-611. Cf. document 14 in the Appendix.
- [355] C. Mattogno, J. Graf, *Treblinka*, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp. 286-288.
- [356] *Terezínská Pamětní Kniha*, Terezínská Iniciativa, Melantrich 1995, p. 393.
- [357] C. Mattogno, J. Graf, *Treblinka*, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp. 200f. (List of transports).
- [358] *Ibidem*, pp. 253-273 and 290-299.

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[1] A. Kola, *Bełżec. The Nazi Camp for Jews in the light of archeological sources. Excavations 1997-1999*, Warsaw-Washington 2000, p. 19; circles with large number as well as large letters "D" and "G" added by this author.

- [2] R. O'Neil, "*Bełżec: The 'Forgotten' Death Camp*," in *East European Jewish Affairs*, 28(2) (1998-9), p. 59.
- [3] R. Reder, *Bełżec*, Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna przy C.K. Żydów Polskich – Oddział w Krakowie, Kraków 1946, p. 43.
- [4] E. Szrojt, "*Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu*," in *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich w Polsce*, III, Poznań 1947, insert without page number.
- [5] Y. Arad, *Bełżec, Sobibor, Treblinka. The Operation Reinhard Death Camps*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1987, p. 437.
- [6] A. Kola, *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 26.
- [7] *Ibidem*, p. 29.
- [8] *Ibidem*, p. 27.
- [9] *Ibidem*, p. 55
- [10] *Ibidem*, p. 56.
- [11] Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, c[2]-611.
- [12] RGVA, 1323-2-292b, p. 6.
- [13] RGVA, 1323-2-292b, pp. 40-42.
- [14] R. Hilberg, *Sonderzüge nach Auschwitz*, Dumjahn Verlag, Mainz 1981, pp. 194-197.
- [15] Peter Witte, Stephen Tyas, "*A New Document on the Deportation and Murder of the Jews during 'Einsatz Reinhardt' 1942*," in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, no. 3, Winter 2001, pp. 469f.